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UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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BRIEUX  
AND  
CONTEMPORARY FRENCH  
SOCIETY

BY  
WILLIAM H. SCHEIFLEY

A THESIS

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN  
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BY

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AUTHOR



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To  
THE MEMORY OF  
MY MOTHER

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## PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is to explain to American readers the social themes treated by Eugène Brieux in his dramas and their relation to French society. I realize very well that such an undertaking is not easy; the difficulties in any attempt to estimate contemporary foreign literature are many and real. It is always hazardous to judge contemporary writers, and French literature is possibly even more baffling than that of most countries for a foreigner to criticize. At least Renan declared that the essential characteristic of the French genius was not to be well understood abroad; and Henry Bidou has recently asserted that it is stupefying to read what a foreigner will write when discussing French literature. Yet the attempt to explain Brieux seems justified in view of the great demand for the few available books on him and on such contemporaries of his as Ibsen, Strindberg, and Shaw.

In the preparation of my work, I have had two objects in view: (1) a consideration of both the literary value and the purpose of each play of Brieux; (2) the testimony of other writers, either in critical or in creative work, regarding the conditions that gave rise to a particular play of Brieux

and the extent to which it reflects the spirit of the time.<sup>1</sup>

The consideration of other authors has necessitated frequent recourse to the novel. This is justifiable in a social subject, where after all the idea, and not the literary form, is the essential thing. *On prend son bien où on le trouve.* Moreover, the French realistic drama, which practically developed out of the realistic novel, from which it emancipated itself only about 1890, is so closely related to the parent genre that one can ill afford to limit a social subject to the drama alone.

Sympathy, it seems to me, should form the basis of literary criticism. For, according to Henry Bordeaux, "*comprendre est le reflet de créer,*" and only a sympathetic attitude can enable the critic to vivify an author's creation sufficiently to understand it.

I now express my thanks to the various French men of letters and critics who have so generously given me information about my subject, especially to M. Adrien Bertrand, M. André Couvreur, Vicomte G. d'Avenel, and Maître Jules Borde. It affords me great pleasure to acknowledge my obligation to Dr. G. H. Maynadier, of Harvard

<sup>1</sup> "The study of the drama," declares J. E. Bodley, "is essential to an acquaintance with the political as well as the social phases of the French nation. . . . Thus a comedy of modern life, studied together with the attitude of its audience and the comments of its critics, will sometimes give a juster insight into a subject of actual interest than all the polemics ever written upon it." *France* (1898), vol. ii, p. 311.



University, for invaluable aid in the revision of the manuscript. I am particularly indebted to Professor J. P. Wickersham Crawford, without whose constant suggestions and encouragement my book would have been impossible.

W. H. S.

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,  
March, 1917.



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BRIEUX AND CONTEMPORARY  
FRENCH SOCIETY



# Brieux and Contemporary French Society

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## CHAPTER I

### THE MAN AND THE SCOPE OF HIS WORK

TO many Americans, unfortunately, the name of Eugène Brieux suggests only the author of *Damaged Goods* (*Les Avariés*). This fact points to a radical misconception of a great dramatist and his work, for *Les Avariés* ranks among Brieux's poorest plays. It is a dozen others or so which have built high his reputation in France, which have led the eminent critic, Léopold Lacour, in writing of Brieux recently, to pay him the significant tribute: "*Nous saluons en lui un Français de race.*" But even if Americans knew far more about Brieux's works than they do, they might, like many of his compatriots, know little of the man himself. It is a singular fact that, although for some years Eugène Brieux has been a familiar name to everybody interested in the French drama, as yet almost nothing has been published regarding his private life. He would seem to have

adopted the attitude of Émile Augier, who once replied to a person requesting biographical information: "I was born in 1820. Since then, nothing has happened to me."

It is discouraging to try to write the biography of a man who shuns reporters, scorns publicity, and fails to inform people of his plans and changes of residence.<sup>1</sup> As early as 1902, one critic, impressed with this trait of the dramatist, wrote:

Ten years ago, M. Brieux was unknown. To-day he is almost famous, and his work is considerable, both in quality and in quantity. Yet his personality remains unknown to the public at large. In the midst of an epoch in which the least literary . . . strive to climb the ladder of renown, M. Brieux, as original in his private life as in his literary work, appears to have a talent for silence. He is referred to only in connection with his plays. I could not say whether his usual residence is in the city or in the country.<sup>2</sup>

Eugène Brieux was born in Paris, in 1858. His parents, who belonged to the artisan class, lived

<sup>1</sup> "It seems to me," says Émile Faguet, "that praise of Brieux appears too rarely in the press, either because he does not advertise himself or for whatever reason it be." *Rev. Bleue*, Oct. 12, 1901.

After quoting a letter in which Maupassant takes the view that an author's works belong to the public, but not his personality, E. Maynial observes that nowadays an author's private life seems to interest the reading public more than do his works. *La Vie et l'Œuvre de Maupassant*, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Veuillot, *Les Prédicateurs de la Scène*, p. 41.



in the Temple district. It was there that his boyhood was spent; and his character bears the imprint of those early surroundings, to which he owes, in part, his remarkable insight into the life of the industrial classes and his sympathetic attitude toward them.<sup>1</sup> Socially, then, Brioux represents the border ground between the common people and the bourgeoisie, though certain of his salient traits: sincerity, earnestness, tenacity, language, vigour, and simplicity of style—classify him rather with the former.<sup>2</sup> In his *Discours de Réception*, on becoming a member of the Academy, he mentioned the humble circumstances of his origin, if not with a justifiable feeling of pride, at least without making any apology for his entry into an august body generally composed of the upper classes.

Nowadays, as soon as a man has acquired fame, it is customary to consult the records of the schools he attended, in the hope of discovering traces of precocious genius. I am unable to say whether this has been done in Brioux's case, but it would hardly be worth while, since his real education began after his school days, with nobody but himself as his teacher. His actual schooling,

<sup>1</sup> It is said that he and his parents hoped naïvely that the municipal bonds, in which they invested their modest savings, might some day draw the first prize. But this turned out as the fable of the Hidden Treasure. Adolphe Brisson, *Les Prophètes*.

<sup>2</sup> H. Pradalès characterizes him as "democratic, slow-going, architect of his own fortunes." *Rev. Bleue*, Dec. 14, 1901.

which ended with his thirteenth year, carried him no farther than the *École communale*, conducted by a religious order, the Christian Brothers, and a commercial school, the *École primaire supérieure*, called the *École Turgot*.<sup>1</sup> This afterwards had the honour of presenting Brieux with an academician's sword. He is its first pupil to enter the French Academy. Even the great Turgot himself, whose name has been given to the school, was not one of the forty Immortals.

When young Brieux left school, as we are told by M. de Ségur, he had a passion for reading, which consumed all his savings. He was a good customer of the popular series called the *Bibliothèque Nationale*,<sup>2</sup> a collection which makes accessible not only the masterpieces of French literature, but, in translation, those of foreign tongues as well, at the uniform price of five sous a volume. It is said that the boy devoured whatever he could lay hands upon, sometimes reading by the light of a gas jet in the stairway, in order to economize. Among the works that first impressed him were Chateaubriand's *Atala* and *René*, Murger's *Latin Quarter*, and Goethe's *Faust*. He early determined to become a man of letters, a career which usually presupposes some knowledge of Latin and Greek, and so he undertook the study of these languages by himself. Greek

<sup>1</sup> He attended also an evening school for a time, but this seems to have been the Turgot School.

<sup>2</sup> "Disc. de Réponse," *Journal des Débats*, May 13, 1910.

proved too difficult for him to master, but in Latin he attained results of which many a classical student might not be ashamed.

The future of the lad of fourteen, with only a rudimentary education and no financial means, was not bright. Left an orphan at that early age, for a time young Brioux led a dreamy, solitary life, prone to pass from enthusiasm to melancholy and discouragement. But fortunately, because he already had a goal in view, he spurned the frivolous amusements of his companions and kept his own way, satisfying as best he could his thirst for knowledge. Ideas were beginning to surge in his head and seek expression. His lot and that of hundreds of his fellow-creatures brought vividly before him the inconsistencies and injustice of the world. The spectacle presented by a large city like Paris, with the misery and suffering of the needy, and the vanity and moral depravity of the well-to-do, could not fail to impress a serious-minded youth. And the message of sympathy sent by Brioux early in the European war to those soldiers at the front who had no near relations, shows that he has not forgotten his own orphan days. He wrote, in part: "You have neither home nor family nor property, and yet you fight with as much heart as those who receive letters by each mail. . . . You fight for the future. . . . Others are born into a family; you will have the distinction of creating yours. They have received; you will give."

No wonder that the future "apostle of the Temple district," like young Pierre Loti, at one time thought of consecrating his life to missionary work. In this he may have been influenced by the clerical atmosphere of the *École communale*, with its directing Brothers of Christian Doctrine, and also by Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme*, which he read about this time. But though young Brieux's evangelistic ardour seems for a while to have been enthusiastic, he had hardly reached the age for choosing a permanent career. Together with missionary ideas, the drama and poetry were haunting his mind. At the age of fifteen, he wrote his first dramatic production—a thesis play, of course. In this way, his evangelistic mood found expression, and he soon realized that it was not necessary to leave Paris in order to do missionary work. Only, I suspect that he would have found it infinitely easier to convert the heathen to Christianity than to correct the social abuses in France.

The writing of plays was inspiring work, but it yielded nothing. So Brieux began to earn his livelihood as a bank clerk, reserving his evenings for writing and study. At that time perhaps not half so many persons as at present were trying their luck at the drama, and yet a beginner was obliged to carry his manuscript from one theatre director to another for years before obtaining a

hearing.<sup>1</sup> In the preface to *Blanchette*, dated 1892, Brieux, in thanking M. Antoine, director of the Théâtre Libre, for giving him a chance, says: "For ten years I peddled my manuscripts about in all the theatres of Paris; most often they were not even read."<sup>2</sup> His appeal to Sarcey brought only the sententious reply that "a shoemaker must learn his trade before presuming to make shoes." Émile Augier, whom he revered as a master, returned his manuscript unopened. Some years later, while in Rouen, Brieux appealed to Zola: "I can't succeed without Paris. Help me to get a hearing there," to which the prophet of Médan replied ironically: "Young man, poverty is an excellent teacher. To help you would be to hurt you."

These bitter experiences, revealing as they did the hard-hearted egotism of the mighty, impressed our future dramatist so profoundly that in his righteous indignation he vowed that if he ever won the favour of the Muses, he would be more considerate towards young authors. It is said that he has never returned a manuscript unopened.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Humiliating experiences of this sort, more than anything else, made a misanthrope of Henry Becque. Cf. Murger's satire in *La Vie de Bohème*, ch. xvi.

<sup>2</sup> Georges de Porto-Riche avers that at the present time there is not a single theatre disposed to read a young author's dramas.

<sup>3</sup> The deplorable situation in dramatic "diplomacy" may be inferred from Alphonse Séché's arraignment of present abuses.



In 1879, Brieux succeeded in getting a play represented at the Cluny Theatre.<sup>1</sup> But the one performance led to nothing, so he decided to give up his position in the bank for journalism, in the hope of furthering his literary ambition. He at first tried newspaper work at Dieppe; then in Rouen, in the office of *Le Nouvelliste*. Beginning here as secretary, he later became editor-in-chief.<sup>2</sup>

Brieux's six years' sojourn in the Norman capital was a valuable period of literary training.<sup>3</sup> Better still, it enabled him to observe provincial life,

"In this corrupt business," he declares, "the man of merit is not the one who writes the play, but rather the one who gets it accepted for representation, who disposes of it. A good producer has his value, but a good agent is worth more. The authors who have 'arrived' assume the more hostile attitude toward young dramatists as their talent declines. Once they have become established in a theatre, they insist that only their pieces shall be played. In order to prevent the barbarians—the young authors—from endangering their position, they stipulate in the contract that their play shall not be dropped from the répertoire as long as the gate receipts amount to a fixed sum." *Le Désarroi de la Consc. fr.*, p. 131.

<sup>1</sup> Bernard Palissy. Cf. Chapter II, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> The *Nouvelliste* numbered among its illustrious contributors Louis Veillot (afterwards editor of *L'Univers*), Flaubert, and Maupassant. At the time of Brieux's arrival (1885), Flaubert had been dead five years, but his name was still adored as that of a divinity. E. Perrée, "Brieux Journaliste et le 'Nouvelliste' de Rouen," *Journal des Débats*, May 13, 1910.

<sup>3</sup> A recent writer, speaking of a similar formative period in the career of Herbert Spencer, says: "He took up journalism with fervour, thus broadening his knowledge of men in this new school, which is so profitable to those whom it does not enslave." G. Rageot, *Deux Mondes*, Aug. 1, 1904.

without which a part—and not the least valuable—of his later plays would have been impossible.<sup>1</sup> In Rouen he had two or three minor plays produced, but all the time he was keeping an attentive eye on the metropolis. Paris still remained the goal of his ambition, the condition of his success and fame.

And the time was near for fame, success, and ambition all to be realized. For several years Brieux's dramatic power had been gaining in naturalness, in the art of satire and *le don de l'observation*. Thanks to these qualities, the manuscript of his *Ménages d'Artistes* now attracted the attention of Antoine, who accepted it in 1890 at the Théâtre Libre.<sup>2</sup> Although the piece was not a complete success, owing both to the nature of the subject, which might have been better adapted to Brieux's dramatic temperament, and to the

<sup>1</sup> According to R. Doumic, the great defect in the majority of representations of social life presented in France and abroad is that they are created by men of letters, who, having voluntarily constituted of themselves an isolated class, see society only from the outside. If such an author attempts to paint for us the manners of the common people and of the country, his incapacity at once becomes manifest. Our urban citizen, with his brain overworked from intellectual effort, cannot understand the simple forms of life, which seem to him almost barbarous. Tolstoy, on the other hand, is thoroughly acquainted with those whom he describes. *Deux Mondes*, Feb. 15, 1900.

<sup>2</sup> This play denies the artist the right to sacrifice his family for his work, and satirizes the claim that the creative artist requires a life of dissipation. Cf. Chapter III, p. 39 ff.

attitude of the spectators at the Théâtre Libre,<sup>1</sup> yet the results encouraged him and spurred his ambition. More important still, Brieux now had the conviction that he was on the right road, and that by choosing a subject more in harmony with his genius, he could write a play of distinguished merit.

Events soon confirmed this conviction and justified his expectations; for with *Blanchette*, which Antoine produced two years later (1892), Brieux's hopes were fully realized. This time the subject, the playwright's temperament, his dramatic principles—all harmonized. The result was a play which reached its hundredth performance and placed Brieux in the front rank of the younger French dramatists.<sup>2</sup> Antoine gave the piece frequently during the rest of his connection with the Théâtre Libre, took it "on tour" in the "provinces," and inaugurated the Théâtre Antoine with it in 1897. The play was later added to the répertoire of the Comédie Française. Brieux is still referred to as "the author of *Blanchette*." But though *Blanchette* first won fame for Brieux, *Ménages d'Artistes* marks the turning point in his career. He would probably not have written *Blanchette* at all, had it not been for the success of the earlier play and the encouragement that

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter III, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> In this comedy, he shows the inconsistency of the State in encouraging its peasantry to rise above their social station through education.



he received from Antoine, who henceforth became his staunch friend and dramatic promoter.<sup>1</sup>

For the first performance of *Ménages d'Artistes* and *Blanchette*, Brioux made the trip from Rouen to Paris, like the great Corneille himself. But this same year (1892) he gave up the editorship of the *Nouvelliste* and returned to Paris, with the intention of devoting himself to his work as playwright. At the same time, he contributed articles on literary and social topics to the *Patrie*, the *Gaulois*, and the *Figaro*.<sup>2</sup> From 1893 to 1899, he was both the dramatic and musical critic of *La Vie Contemporaine*. He also gave some lec-

<sup>1</sup> This remarkable theatre-manager and actor, André Antoine, was for a time an obscure employé at one of the Paris gas-plants, who took up the Thespian art, founded the Théâtre Libre (1887), removed to the Théâtre Antoine, ten years later, and in 1906 was appointed director of the Odéon, one of the four theatres of Paris subsidized by the State. He resigned this directorship in 1914. Since then he has been mentioned only in connection with popular performances.

The purpose of the Théâtre Libre was to give young playwrights a hearing and to encourage a naturalistic form of realism somewhat after the pattern of Becque's *Les Corbeaux*, to replace the discredited "well-made" piece as represented by Dumas, Pailleron, and Sardou. Antoine, who has justly been called the most remarkable *homme de théâtre* produced by France in his generation, "discovered" not only Brioux, but also Curot, Lavedan, Descaves, Maurice Boniface, and certain minor French dramatists of our time.

<sup>2</sup> *Dictionnaire nat. des Contemp.*, iv, p. 356. Some of these articles bear evidence that the subsequent author of *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont* could even write occasionally in the ironical spirit of Parisian boulevard *blague*; but this tone was not in harmony with his personal convictions.

tures at the *Salle des Capucines*.<sup>1</sup> Soon, however, dramatic production absorbed all his time. Plays now followed in rapid succession. In 1892 appeared *M. de Réboval*, a four-act satire on the pompous conscientiousness of a model bourgeois; the next year, *La Couvée*, a play dealing with the home training of children; in 1894, *L'Engrenage*, a comedy showing the evils of universal suffrage; two years later, *Les Bienfaiteurs*, a satire on worldly charity. *L'Évasion*, a satire on pseudo-science, which was represented this same year (1896), marks the close of what some critics have termed the first period of Brieux's dramatic production. With this play, according to them, ends for several years the predominance in his dramas of the comic element over the militant seriousness which becomes so noticeable in the six or eight dramas that follow. The distinction no doubt has a certain justification, but it may be insisted on too strongly.<sup>2</sup>

The second division of his plays, which has been characterized as Brieux's Storm and Stress period, was inaugurated in 1897 with *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont*, a study of marriage based on the dot-system. Next followed *Résultat des Courses* (1898), a play depicting the misery caused among the working classes by gambling on the races; and the same year, *Le Berceau*, a drama combat-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Barrett H. Clark, *The Drama*, Aug., 1913, sets forth clearly the reason for a three-period division of Brieux's plays.

ing the abuses of divorce. In *La Robe Rouge* (1900), Brieux shows the deplorable consequences of the "fever for promotion" among the French magistracy. In *Les Remplaçantes* (1901), he denounces the evils of wet-nursing. In *Les Avariés* (1901), he sounds a cry of alarm against the ravages of syphilis in marriage. *La Petite Amie* (1902) exposes the egotism of the bourgeoisie and their misconception of parental duty. *Maternité* (1903), a violent denunciation of the egotism of men and of the "hypocrisies" of society in the matter of motherhood, completes his second period.

A milder, more optimistic tone of Brieux's dramatic work begins with *La Déserteuse* (1904), which opens his so-called final period. This piece studies the situation of child and parents in the case of separation or divorce. *L'Armature* (1905), from a novel by Paul Hervieu, shows money to be a great corrupter of morals. *Les Hannelons* (1906) explodes the claim that free love is less enslaving than marriage. *La Française* (1907) deplores the misconception of France and of French morals abroad, owing to the frivolous tendencies of certain of her writers. *Simone* (1908) denies the right of a man to kill his wife for adultery. *Suzette* (1909) supplements *Le Berceau* and *La Déserteuse*, emphasizing the rights of the child and of the mother, in case of a separation of the parents. *La Foi* (1909) shows the desirability of religious faith. *La Femme Seule* (1913) pleads for fair

play between the sexes and denounces the injustices to which women are exposed in trying to make an independent living. *Le Bourgeois aux Champs* (1914), Brieux's last piece, emphasizes the incompatibility existing between the bourgeoisie and the peasantry, and points out the futility of a bourgeois with a smattering of science presuming to become a gentleman farmer.

Up to the present, then, there is a total of twenty-two serious plays by Brieux, and six or eight lighter pieces, which is no mean achievement for a man who, by force of circumstances, got started late and whose dramatic career, we hope, is not yet ended. The fertility of Brieux's mind seems the more remarkable in that each play, with the exception of *Le Berceau*, *La Déserteuse*, *Suzette*, and *Simone*, treats an independent subject. This does not mean that there is no repetition of ideas. Such a matter as the relation of typical bourgeois parents to their children, Brieux may touch on in half a dozen different plays; but what is of chief importance in one will be subordinate in the others. With the exception of the four plays just noted, the main theme is always varied. How different this makes Brieux's task from that of a dramatist who contented himself with the infinite variations of the theme of sex and adultery! I suspect that *Les Hannelons*, Brieux's one comedy of the sex pattern, cost him less than half the average time required



for what may be called his strictly "social" plays.<sup>1</sup> And *Les Hanneçons* compares very favourably with the pieces of its kind. But with Brieux the important thing is the idea, however thorny and unpleasant the subject. And when a strong appeal is necessary to awaken the public conscience, he presents this idea in the form of a salutary truth, or even a lesson.

Brieux did not abandon Rouen for Paris because he was unable to live away from the boulevards, but in order not to lose the fruits of his first success. As soon as his reputation was established, he occupied a villa at Agay, near Cannes, far from the noise and gossip of the capital. The rural solitude of this abode, with its blue sky and the view over the sea, was for a time the dramatist's delight. Unfortunately a road was built by his house, and tourists flocked to his villa as to a national curiosity. In vain he

<sup>1</sup> After all, it is not easy to say what we mean by "strictly social," for, as M. Marion, a professor at the Collège de France, has said, nothing is more comprehensive than the term "social." According to his definition, social is "tout ce qui se rapporte à la vie de l'homme en société; tous les actes, tous les états, tous les rapports des différents groupements humains sont des faits sociaux; les langues, les croyances, les connaissances, les habitudes, les conditions matérielles de la vie, les lois . . . les institutions politiques et administratives, les mœurs, souvent si différentes de ces lois et de ces institutions, etc., sont des faits sociaux, et constituent les objets d'autant de sciences qui sont, à vrai dire, des sciences sociales. Il n'est absolument aucune branche de l'histoire qui ne soit sociale, à prendre le mot dans son sens large."

painted on the yard wall: "*Je suis venu ici pour être seul et travailler*"; he was obliged to seek another retreat. This time he chose a secluded region in the department of Loiret. Here it is one of his grave civic duties to serve as local school examiner—an appropriate office for the author of *Blanchette*. He devotes his spare moments to farming. He likes to sit for hours at a time on the bank of a stream, meditating while he watches his fishing-rod.<sup>1</sup> In this rural solitude, he works at his manuscripts. When matters connected with the staging of one of his plays requires his presence in Paris, he takes temporary residence there.

M. Brieux's personal appearance is described by M. de Morsier as follows:

*Grand, solide: un maître sur la planche d'escrime comme sur les planches du théâtre; avec le front large et haut, les longs cheveux qui bouclent rejetés en arrière; les yeux clairs, d'un éclat presque gênant—malgré le bon sourire de la bouche dans la barbe. . . . Mais en même temps, une taille élancée; point de forte carrure d'épaules, et des mains de femme, c'est-à-dire du gentil-homme campagnard, du chasseur, du sportsman.*<sup>2</sup>

Another writer says that Brieux gives one the impression of a robust paladin, so completely does his physical person correspond to his life of enthusiasm and action.<sup>3</sup> An English biographer describes Brieux's temperament as

<sup>1</sup> M. de Ségur, *Disc. de Réponse*.

<sup>2</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Dec. 12, 1903.

<sup>3</sup> A. Bertrand, *E. Brieux*, p. 5.

## The Man and Scope of His Work 17

simple, direct, not modest, not assertive; full of the right sort of pride, and plenty of vanity, doubtless. Capable of being serious, but not too serious. Keen and interested at once, with the native shrewdness of a peasant. Not a specialist. A very humane man in every way, simple and straightforward, with the absorbing eye of an observer and the jaw of a fighter.<sup>1</sup>

Still another of Brieux's traits is given by A.-E. Sorel, who says of him: "Although a man of fiery earnestness, he speaks with a deliberation which enables him to weigh the words he utters."<sup>2</sup>

Beginning with 1892, Brieux's plays attracted more and more attention, as he took up one social question after another. Every year, as a rule, he brought out upon the boards for consideration some crying abuse or some ulcerous evil from which society and the national welfare were suffering. *Blanchette* (1892), his first station on the road to the supreme goal of French men of letters, marked him out to critics as a playwright of promise. *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont* (1897), *Le Berceau* (1898), and *La Robe Rouge* (1900) made him one of the foremost dramatists of our time. Subsequent plays, such as *Les Remplaçantes* (1901), *Les Avariés* (1901), and *Maternité* (1903), while adding little if anything to his literary reputation, at least extended his fame to the most distant lands and compelled even those not in sympathy with his dramatic tendencies to admit that he

<sup>1</sup> P. V. Thomas, *The Plays of Eugène Brieux*, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Grande Rev.*, Feb. 15, 1904.

was exerting a great influence.<sup>1</sup> When, then, after the production of *Simone* (1908), Brieux presented his candidacy for the seat left vacant by the death of Ludovic Halévy, the Immortals received him into their august body (1910).

This crowned Brieux's desires and satisfied a long-cherished ambition. He was already connected with the Department of Public Instruction and was a *Chevalier* of the Legion of Honour. After the resignation of Jules Claretie (1913), he was offered the directorship of the Comédie Française, but he refused this honour, because he desired to write plays of his own instead of producing those of other dramatists.

In recent years Brieux has travelled extensively in the Orient, visiting India, Egypt, and Japan.<sup>2</sup> He represented the French Academy at the meeting of the American Academy of Arts and Letters held in New York in November, 1914. Although a very busy man, he finds time to render service to those in distress, as he demonstrated in 1914 by suddenly appearing at the Palace of Justice to testify on behalf of a former acquaintance.<sup>3</sup> Since the beginning of the European conflict, Brieux, as President of the French Committee for the Blind, has devoted his entire time, except the few weeks spent in the United States, to the re-

<sup>1</sup> "One may not like this kind of literature," says Paul Flat, in speaking of Brieux's works, "but its influence upon the public can hardly be denied." *Figures de ce Temps*.

<sup>2</sup> His early interest in Japan is attested by his curious *Mi-ki-ka* (1893), a seventeen-page *japonaiserie rouennaise* in verse.

<sup>3</sup> *Le Matin*, Jan. 27, 1914.



education and rehabilitation of the French soldiers blinded in the war.<sup>1</sup> A prominent critic says of him in all truth: "There exists nowhere a more sincere heart, a more wholesome personality, a more perfect moral sensibility."<sup>2</sup>

Nor, it may be said, is praise of him expressed only by admiring critics. Even more eloquent testimony to his place among French men of letters is the creative work of his contemporaries. Over and over again you will find novelists as well as dramatists considering virtually the same problems as Brieux. Whether they anticipate him or follow him is immaterial; in either case they testify to the general interest in the themes he treats. The documentary evidence of other writers, then, creative as well as critical, must be taken extensively, if one will understand how widely representative Brieux is of the serious thought of French society in recent years.

<sup>1</sup> "M. Brieux has put aside his writing and all his other activities," says Mrs. George A. Kessler, Honorary Secretary of the Permanent American Blind Relief War Fund, "in order to apply himself wholly to uplifting those unfortunates. His devotion to their welfare has caused him to become the valued counsellor of M. Justin Godart at the War Office and of M. Brisac, Director of the Public Health Service at the Home Office, who are officially in charge of the nation's blinded soldiers, and who do nothing without taking his advice. Indeed, so great and successful have been his activities that throughout France M. Brieux is affectionately known as the 'Father of the Blind.' In fact, no one knows the blind so well as he. Nobody has studied them, their trials and their needs, with more care, more intelligence, more heart."

<sup>2</sup> A. Brisson, *Le Théâtre*, 1908, p. 77.

## CHAPTER II

### BRIEUX'S MINOR PLAYS. HIS CONCEPTION OF THE DRAMA

IT is difficult to say just how many minor pieces Brieux has produced, since he did not always acknowledge his creations; but the following list cannot be far from accurate. *Bernard Palissy* (1879); *Le Bureau des Divorces* (1886); *Sténio* (1888); *Corneille à Petit-Couronne* (1890); *La Fille de Duramé* (1890); *Fifine* (1894); *Le Soldat Graindor* (1895); *La Rose Bleue* (1895); *L'École des Belles-Mères* (1898).<sup>1</sup> To these may be added *M. de Réboval* (1892), which, though a more serious play, has nevertheless remained unpublished.<sup>2</sup> All, it may be seen from their dates, represent early tendencies or experiments of their author, and all fall within what we have called his first period. Even the last, *L'École des Belles-Mères*, is a seeming rather than a real exception, for like *Fifine* and *Le Soldat Graindor*, it is a making over

<sup>1</sup> The *Dictionnaire nat. des Contemp.* mentions also a one-act piece entitled *Chacun chez Soi*, played at Rouen, in 1894.

<sup>2</sup> Among Brieux's miscellaneous works might be mentioned *Les Remplaçantes* (1902), a novel in collaboration with M. Marcel Luguët, and *Le Crédit agricole tel que le veulent nos paysans* (1888).

of material from *La Couvée*, written in 1893. The plays are interesting not for themselves, but because they show us the beginning of Brieux's dramatic career.

Brieux's interest in the life of Bernard Palissy can hardly have been mere chance. In the opening passage of his *Discours de Réception*, he says: "At the age of fifteen, I wrote my first drama; and I promised myself that some day I should occupy the place where I am now standing."<sup>1</sup> Such a determined spirit would find a stimulating example in the life of the man who devoted twenty years to the discovery of the enameled art, sacrificing his furniture, all the combustible material in his house, and even his floor, to feed the furnace of his experiments. Brieux must have found especially encouraging the fact that this man, without a knowledge of Greek or Latin, distinguished himself as a glass-maker, an architect, a naturalist, a geologist, and a lecturer, besides carrying on a religious propaganda.<sup>2</sup>

*Bernard Palissy*, a one-act drama in verse written in collaboration with G. Salandri, is set in Saintes (Charente Inférieure), the scene of the hero's memorable experiments.<sup>3</sup> The time is

<sup>1</sup> H. Pradalès calls Brieux *un tête farouche*, and emphasizes his tenacity. "On peut l'éreinter tant qu'on voudra, on ne saurait le décourager." *Rev. Bleue*, Dec. 14, 1901.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Palissy acquired his education himself while pursuing his various investigations.

<sup>3</sup> I am indebted to Mr. Thomas's work on *The Plays of Eugène Brieux* for certain information about this drama.

about 1560. The stage represents a room in Palissy's house, with the red light of furnaces in the background. All the furniture and even the doors have been used to feed the fires.<sup>1</sup>

But Palissy has the mettle of the true artist: not content with being the most distinguished of glass-painters, he has determined to wrest from nature the secret of making enamel. This has become his ruling passion.<sup>2</sup> His wife and daughter, after years of privation and suffering, decide to leave him for the time as the only means of making him listen to reason.<sup>3</sup> But the daughter, Jeanne, soon comes back, ready, if necessary, to give up her fiancé rather than betray her father's glory. While Palissy is making a final experiment, his wife and Jeanne's fiancé return. A terrific explosion is heard. Poor Palissy cries out that all is lost; but he soon discovers that the explosion has revealed the precious secret. Wife and daughter forget their past hardships. The play ends in a eulogy of France and her glory; that is, her great men.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In order to discourage others from making similar experiments, Palissy exaggerated the story of his difficulties, because he did not want anybody to discover the secrets of his process. Cf. E. Dupuy, *Bernard Palissy*, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the savant and his daughter in *Maître Guérin* (Augier). The realism of the laboratory experiments in the same author's *Un Beau Mariage* produced a great effect.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Balthazar Claës and his family in Balzac's *La Recherche de l'Absolu*.

<sup>4</sup> It was originally Balzac's intention to make Bernard Palissy the hero of *Les Souffrances d'un Inventeur*. He not only bases

*Le Bureau des Divorces* (*The Divorce Office*, 1886), a one-act vaudeville, was never performed. It is a satire on the divorce law (*Loi Naquet*) passed in 1884. The inferiority of this farce seems due to the fact that its author was not seriously alarmed over the possible consequences of the law; later in *Le Berceau*, where Brieux is in "dead earnest," he expresses his views on divorce with all seriousness. This vaudeville is interesting only as an earlier expression of his attitude.

*Sténio*, a romantic drama, narrates the unfortunate courtship of a poet and the noble Gisèle, the daughter of a powerful duke. The populace applauds the courtship and the noblemen drink to the young couple's love. But at this point, just as in certain of Maurice Maeterlinck's symbolist dramas, events, as if by a decree of fate, take a bad turn. A quarrel ensues, the palace burns down, and the lovers meet a tragic death.

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the plot of his *Illusions Perdues* in part on the theme of Palissy's memorable struggles, but refers directly to the illustrious discoverer with the words of Daniel Séchard to his young wife: "In the sixteenth century, there lived near here, at Saintes, one of the greatest men of France. For he was not only the inventor of enamel, but also one of the glorious precursors of Buffon, of Cuvier. . . . At one time his wife, his children, and all the people of the place were against him. He wandered about the country misunderstood." But the work of Balzac which Brieux may have followed in part is *La Recherche de l'Absolu*, the story of Balthazar Claës, a chemist of Douai, whose long experiments, like Palissy's, bring financial ruin to his wife and children.



This drama was produced at the Théâtre Français in Rouen.<sup>1</sup> It is probably based vaguely on Norman history, or at least on legend. The piece has not been published.

I have not succeeded in finding any detailed information about *Corneille à Petit-Couronne*.<sup>2</sup> The *Dictionnaire national des Contemporains*,<sup>3</sup> calls it an *A-propos en un acte*, a dramatic composition in one act, and merely says that it was given at Rouen in 1890.

*La Fille de Duramé* (*The Daughter of Duramé*, 1890), a melodrama in five acts with complicated plot, was also brought out at the Théâtre Français in Rouen. Brieux took the plot from the judicial annals of Normandy.<sup>4</sup> It is the story of a brigand with a daughter, who has been substituted for the child of a well-to-do citizen of Rouen and who is always protected by her father. He never discloses to her the secret of her birth till he has rescued her from a robber's cave in which various romantic adventures have placed her. But in the end the bandit father is executed and the girl restored as the daughter of the citizen of Rouen.

"This work," says M. Perrée, "had only a success of curiosity. The incursion into the domain of history demonstrated to M. Brieux that he

<sup>1</sup> E. Perrée, "Brieux et le 'Nouvelliste de Rouen,'" *Journal des Débats*, May 13, 1910.

<sup>2</sup> The title evidently has reference to Corneille's country estate near Rouen.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. iv, p. 356.

<sup>4</sup> E. Perrée, ref. quoted.

was on the wrong road. He understood this and henceforth consecrated himself to social themes."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, one would never suspect that Brieux had written this melodrama, or even that he could take interest in such a theme.

*Fifine* and *Le Soldat Graindor*, of the middle nineties, are scarcely more than variant episodes from *La Couvée*,<sup>2</sup> one act of which was later (1898) printed separately under the title of *L'École des Belles-Mères* (*A School for Mothers-in-Law*). *Le Soldat Graindor* (*Graindor, the Soldier*) was played at Marseilles.

*La Rose Bleue* (*The Blue Rose*), first represented at the Grand Theatre of Geneva, in 1895, possesses, more than most of these minor plays, the qualities which have given Brieux his fame. It is a charming one-act comedy centring in the caprices of Juliette, a tomboy of nine brought up by her godfather (really her father), a count separated from his wife and living a retired life far from Paris. Since their separation, which was due to marital infidelity, the Count has devoted himself to the culture of roses, in the hope of producing the "blue rose." This Rose, which symbolizes his happiness, is Juliette herself. The Countess, who attaches great importance to decorum and *savoir-vivre*, comes from Paris to take Juliette and place her in a fashionable boarding-school. But the capricious girl, after charming the Countess with her good manners, begins to use the most

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*    <sup>2</sup> For summary of *La Couvée*, see Chapter V, p. 120 ff.

shocking slang when she learns the object of the Countess's visit, because she wants to stay in the country with her *parrain*. The Count readily consents to this, for without Juliette life would be intolerable to him.

Although the Count and Countess are somewhat artificial, the portraits of the tomboy and of the Count's young gardener, an *ingénu* cry-baby with just enough stupidity, are very well done.

*M. de Réboval* (1892), a comedy in four acts, was first represented at the Odeon Theatre. Its unity is marred by a pessimistic tendency of the last two acts, for Brieux was still a bit obsessed by the philosophy in vogue at the Théâtre Libre. He has never consented to publish the piece. It is a satire on the conventionality of the bourgeois, his *vie de façade*, his pompous conception of duty, morality, and the basis of society, his conviction of having done his full duty—and even twice his duty—if only he saves appearances.<sup>1</sup> The theme is developed by presenting the double life of M. de Réboval, a grave, pompous, correct senator, who tries to divide his time, affections, and income impartially between his two households—one presided over by his wife with their daughter; the other by his mistress with their son. After the son and daughter fall in love and wish to marry, Réboval is obliged to confess the wrong he has

<sup>1</sup> Brieux attacks this Pharisaic serenity of conscience in several subsequent plays, particularly *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont*, *Les Remplaçantes*, and *Suzette*.



done them and to beg them humbly for pardon. Brieux evidently hopes that henceforth the Senator will have a clearer, though more prosaic, conception of morality and his obligations to society. A secondary theme of the play concerns itself with the child's lot in case of a liaison—one phase of a question that constantly haunts Brieux's mind.<sup>1</sup>

A comparison of Brieux's early efforts, as seen from these brief summaries, with his later works will show that his evolution bears evidence of good judgment. After a certain amount of unavoidable groping and casting about, he returned to his early apostolical inclinations, which had now assumed a social form. He realized that his forte was the treatment of social problems. *Sténio* and *La Fille de Duramé* had demonstrated his lack of talent for the romantic and the fantastic, while *Ménages d'Artistes*, *Blanchette*, *M. de Réboval*, *La Couvée*, and its unpretentious variants, *Fifine* and *Le Soldat Graindor*, indicated ability in themes of actuality. This encouraged him to look about him and towards the future, instead of seeking subjects in the past. *La Rose Bleue*

<sup>1</sup> Brieux at first called this play *Monsieur le Sénateur*, then *Les Enfants Justiciers*. It is a variant of an old theme treated by Augier (*Les Fourchambault*, 1878), and by Albert Delpit (*Les Maucroix*, 1883). The Marquis de Maucroix richly deserves our contempt and our pity. His double household is about to result in a terrible tragedy, inasmuch as both his legitimate son and his illegitimate son quarrel over a senator's daughter. But thanks to a couple of unexpected turns, the storm passes.

made it clear that in attempting to portray the old aristocracy he had taken a path which was not likely to lead to his goal. In *Bernard Palissy*, his only attempt at drama in verse, it was the patriotic and moral lesson in the achievements of Palissy that appealed to him,—a theme taken up again in *La Française*. The novel, it would seem, failed to satisfy his desire for dramatic action and didactic expression.

X In 1896, then, the year that marks Brieux's transition from his first period of composition to his second and on the whole more serious period, he could no longer feel any doubt. He owed it to himself to cast his lot permanently with the prose drama in one form or another—whether the comedy of manners, the problem play, the thesis play, or, as M. de Ségur puts it, the useful play.<sup>1</sup> This was not only the literary form in which he excelled, but also the one best adapted to his purpose.

And Brieux has never denied that he has a purpose—or even a mission, if you prefer the term. In so far, he is the direct heir of Dumas *filis*, who maintained that all literature which does not aim at perfectibility, morality, and utility,

<sup>1</sup> It is thus that he designates the type of play preferred by Brieux. (*Disc. de Réponse.*) The useful play, though seemingly the same thing as the problem play and the thesis play, may be said to differ from them in that Brieux's desire to render service to mankind leads him to undertake the dramatization of difficult subjects like *Les Avariés*, and *Les Remplaçantes*. In short, the useful play emphasizes social utility still more than do the other dramatic forms.

is stunted and moribund.<sup>1</sup> He has faith in mankind. He believes that evil and suffering and misery exist in the world, not so much because people so will it, but rather because they fail to realize their share of responsibility. He would appeal to the heart and inspire men with a desire to stand by good government, uphold clean morals, and disseminate wholesome hygienic truths. He would move the masses, awaken their sense of conscience, make them see the gravity of evil and its consequences.<sup>2</sup> "Each of Brieux's plays," says Mr. Lawrence Irving, "shows that the miseries in it are the consequences of some particular malpractice of men and therefore that the remedy lies in a reform of the practice."<sup>3</sup> Brieux frankly admits that with every one of his plays he has tried to do some good, to make people better and wiser.<sup>4</sup> He writes plays with the purpose not

<sup>1</sup> Dumas believed that the dramatist should discuss on the stage the fundamental questions of society: marriage, the family, adultery, prostitution, religion, atheism, law, justice, the nationalities, and races. For a time these ideas were classed with Dumas's paradoxes; but the paradoxes of the past may be the current truths of the future.

<sup>2</sup> Comte believed that men could be reformed by legislation; that our vices are due largely to defective laws. Brieux accepts this idea in principle, only, the laws must be supported by public sentiment.

<sup>3</sup> *Forum*, June, 1910.

<sup>4</sup> "The dramatist is in direct communication with the masses. He has at his disposal those whose imagination he can captivate and whose sensibility he can touch. Should he not make this incomparable power further what he regards as the true and the good?" R. Doumic, *Deux Mondes*, Jan. 15, 1896.

only of making people think, but also, and more particularly, of making them act. To quote his own words: "Humanity is perfectible, the world is improving, and we may as well do all we can to hasten that evolution, which nothing can prevent or stop."<sup>1</sup> And so, convinced that the drama makes a more powerful appeal than any other literary form, Brieux uses it in the hope of reaching primarily the deep hidden strata of society, and not merely the limited few who read books.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Interview," *Daily Mail*, Paris edition, Aug. 24, 1909.

<sup>2</sup> Similar is the attitude of Edouard Rod, who asks what it avails to have discovered the good if we do not make use of it. Hence it follows, he argues, that we cannot be happy—not even at ease—unless we practice the principles whose truth we have recognized. *Idées Morales du Temps Présent*.

## CHAPTER III

### ARTISTS ACCORDING TO RECENT FRENCH LITERATURE

*Ménages d'Artistes* (Brieux)—*Cabotins* (Pail-leron)—*Paraître* (Donnay)—*Un Raté* (Gyp)—*La Camaraderie* (Scribe)—*Charles Demailly* (Gon-court)—*La Femme d'Henri Vanneau* (Rod)—*Le Bercaïl* (Bernstein)—*La Femme Nue* (Bataille).

IT is both logical and fitting that the discussion of Brieux's serious plays should begin with *Ménages d'Artistes*. As we have seen,<sup>1</sup> without the production of this play at the Théâtre Libre on March 21, 1890, his dramatic talent might never have been revealed to the public. Moreover, inasmuch as our documentary method of criticism will necessitate the consideration of numerous authors, it is well at the outset to examine certain salient traits of literary men, at least traits attributed to literary men by critics and others of their *confrères*. In *Ménages d'Artistes* (*Artists' Households*), Brieux treats particularly the weaknesses of such men and of other artists, a theme which always has furnished authors with material, and probably always will.

<sup>1</sup> Chapter I, p. 10.



It is significant that Renan, after declaring with pompous enthusiasm that the domain of letters is the Olympus on whose serene heights all struggles and inequalities cease, where all differences are reconciled—"Peace has its abode only on high"—should be obliged to admit, in the same discourse, that literary men are very severe toward one another. They anathematize one another, he goes on to say, when often on both sides it is a case of merit insulting merit, of truth reviling truth.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, if we are to believe that competent critic, Robert de Flers, whose raillery contains more truth than fiction, authors have always been much given to waging war upon one another. When together, it is true, they regard themselves as brothers, though rather as hostile brothers. Being for the most part people of culture, and hence desirous of avoiding scandal, they bestow profuse marks of mutual esteem in public, in order to maintain an appearance of ideal comradeship. But such civilities may be only a veneer to conceal disdain, jealousy, and envy.<sup>2</sup> Alfred Capus asserts that there are literary salons whose members direct all their activity towards the destruction of the reputation of the writers and artists belonging to any other coterie.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Discours de Réception*, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> Pref. to Stoullig's *Annales* (1911). Victor Hugo says somewhere: "Les haines politiques désarment, les haines littéraires, jamais."

<sup>3</sup> *Figaro*, Aug. 19, 1912.

This tragic duality in the lives of authors is due to egotism and vanity, which make us exceedingly susceptible toward our competitors and rivals. We care little about the superior talent of those in another social class, or of a different profession; but we are reluctant to admit the superiority of a *confrère*. Artists of all kinds are especially prone to this failing, owing to the personal character of art, and hence the difficulty of estimating its value. Thus it happens that a man of letters, while viewing his own creations through a powerful magnifying lens, may see the works of his fellows from a very different perspective. Each author considers himself the centre of the universe.<sup>1</sup> Or as Anatole France expresses it, a literary man is inclined to believe that the world will end with him. He fancies that he possesses exclusively all the secrets of his craft.<sup>2</sup> If requested to discuss dramatic art, a playwright thinks only of his particular conception, taking for granted that the real drama, the drama of the future, is what he is producing, or intends to produce.<sup>3</sup> We see an illustration of this in the case of Fontenelle who, in his *Discours sur l'Églogue*, shows his superiority over Theocritus and Vergil.<sup>4</sup> Or, to take a contemporary example, Bernard

<sup>1</sup> J. Ernest-Charles, *Rev. Bleue*, Jan. 6, 1905.

<sup>2</sup> *Vie littér.*, ii, p. ix.

<sup>3</sup> A. Capus, Pref. to Stoullig's *Annales* (1903).

<sup>4</sup> All his life Piron sincerely believed that he was Voltaire's superior.

Shaw "cuts off another dog's tail every morning."<sup>1</sup> Geniuses and masterpieces have never been so numerous as they are today.<sup>2</sup>

Artists themselves are not wholly responsible for this impression. One gets a similar impression from the press, which, in its efforts to promote "literary industry," has put literary success upon a commercial basis,<sup>3</sup> so that almost anybody, it would seem, can acquire genius by paying the price.<sup>4</sup> As long ago as 1839, Sainte-Beuve declared that "industrial literature" had crowded out and almost completely replaced literary criticism.<sup>5</sup> Even earlier, Balzac, in *Le Charlatanisme*, satirized the use of the press as a medium for promoting literary fame.<sup>6</sup> But the author of *The Human Comedy* did not foresee the gigantic proportions of the *débauches de publicité* denounced by J. Ernest-Charles, who asserts that one of Lucien Muhlfeld's novels occupies more critical and advertising space than ten volumes by famous authors.<sup>7</sup> A character in a recent drama declares: "At thirty I shall be famous, decorated, and ready

<sup>1</sup> A. Filon, *Deux Mondes*, Nov. 15, 1905.

<sup>2</sup> A. Capus, *Figaro*, Jan. 29, 1912.

<sup>3</sup> A. Capus, *Mœurs du Temps*, i, 13.

<sup>4</sup> A. Séché, *Le Désarroi de la Consc. fr.*, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> "De la Litt. industrielle."

<sup>6</sup> 1825. In *Illusions Perdues* (1837), we can see "literary industry" manifesting itself in the form of mutually stimulated bombast, the conspiracy of coteries, and the tyranny of literary criticism. Compare, in the eighteenth century, *Les Prôneurs*, by Claude Dorat.

<sup>7</sup> "La Litt. industrielle," *Rev. Bleue*, Nov. 8, 1902.



for the Academy. . . . Every day several journals, if not all, mention me. The occasion matters little. My name is making an impression by dint of sheer repetition. I am advancing; I am approaching the goal. I am now sure of arriving."<sup>1</sup>

The same abuse is satirized by Paul Brulat, in *La Faiseuse de Gloire* (1901), by which he means the press. His hero, a talented journalist with high ideals, determined to follow the dictates of his conscience, is frowned upon by his editor-in-chief and shunned by his fellow-journalists, who fear to be compromised by the daring independence of his articles. Finally poverty and the irony of fate compel the poor fellow to compose his articles in the spirit demanded by the man he despises, who signs them as his own and allows the real author one tenth of the money received for them.

Another essential trait of the nineteenth-century artist is his anti-bourgeois affectation. René Doumic's recent remark, "The drama is pretty hard on the bourgeois in this year of grace, 1914,"<sup>2</sup> would apply to any year since 1830. Before the beginning of romanticism, poets and artists did not concern themselves with the bourgeois, but worked for the amateur, the connoisseur, the educated, and the nobility. The theory of art for art's sake originated at the time of the rise of democracy, when the artist sought a retreat, far from the mediocrity of *le bourgeois imbécile*, in

<sup>1</sup> L. Gleize, *Le Veau d'Or* (1913).

<sup>2</sup> *Deux Mondes*, Mar. 15, 1914.

his ivory tower, where he might work for himself and a few select of his kind.<sup>1</sup> The romantic theory of genius divided mankind into two irreconcilable families: the one, quite small and sublime, the family of the artists; the other, immense, odious, ridiculous, and contemptible, the family of the bourgeois.<sup>2</sup> But this was only a "mode." Lamartine, Hugo, Musset, Sainte-Beuve, and George Sand soon resumed the bourgeois life that they had for a time ridiculed. Balzac and Berlioz almost alone refused to disarm; nobody except the "artist" enjoyed their full esteem.<sup>3</sup> Of his two thousand literary creations, Balzac prefers even the prostitute and the outlaw to the bourgeois.<sup>4</sup> We see this attitude in *Pierre Grassou* (1839). Everything about Pierre indicated mediocrity. Yet thanks to his regular habits and his bourgeois economy, he produced one painting after another, all of which he sold at a fair profit. This sorry artist was a model citizen: he performed

<sup>1</sup> A. Séché, *Le Désarroi de la Consc. fr.*, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> A. Le Breton, *Balzac*, p. 22. "C'est certainement de son horreur pour le bourgeois qu'est né chez Flaubert le goût de le peindre. Il a voulu assouvir sa haine en montrant son ennemi personnel dans toute sa laideur." É. Faguet, *Rev. Bleue*, Jan. 25, 1896.

<sup>3</sup> Gautier's noisy anti-bourgeois pranks must not be taken too seriously.

<sup>4</sup> A. Le Breton, *Balzac*, p. 241. The affectation of Balzac's social snobbery is evident from a description of his personality. According to Émile Faguet, "ses manières étaient lourdes, brusques et sans grâce, son ajustement à la fois prétentieux et négligé. Tout ce qu'on appelle distinction lui était absolument étranger. . . . Il était peuple dans le mauvais et aussi dans le bon sens du mot, de la tête aux pieds." *Balzac*, p. 22.

guard duty, attended military reviews, and paid his bills with the most scrupulous bourgeois regularity. One day Vervelle, a patron of Pierre's who had made his fortune in the bottle industry, invited him to his country estate, where he showed him his private gallery of Rembrandts, Rubenses, Murillos, etc. To Pierre's amazement, he discovered that these masterpieces were all his own productions. Only, the former bottle-dealer had paid the Jewish art collector many times as much for them as Pierre had received. It goes without saying that Pierre marries Vervelle's daughter and becomes an artist of genius according to general bourgeois opinion.

Despite the early reaction in favour of bourgeois standards of the writers just mentioned, men of letters have continued to be obsessed by the theory of romanticism.

When one sells groceries [says J. R. Bloch satirically] one is a grocer; when one dresses stone, one is a stone dresser; he who writes political articles is a politician. But when one devotes one's self to a certain number of oral or written things without importance to anyone and quite devoid of public or private consequences, then one is . . . an artist.<sup>1</sup>

It may be said that the only characteristic common to French writers of the nineteenth century, with a few exceptions,<sup>2</sup> is their contempt for the bourgeois. We hear a great deal about

<sup>1</sup> "Art et Politique," *Effort Libre*, Mar., 1912.

<sup>2</sup> Scribe, Augier, Pailleron, Ohnet.

the literary pendulum and its laws of contrast, according to which each new school disavows its predecessor and turns in a different direction; but no new school is willing to dispense with its favourite target—the bourgeois.<sup>1</sup> Yet nothing could be more inconsistent, or at least more unnatural, than this literary consistency; for these writers—all of them—are bourgeois, even bourgeois “bourgeoisissant.” One does not see how such a literary anachronism can still persist, in view of Paul Flat’s assertion that “at the present time men of letters and artists are perfect bourgeois with the most regular habits.”<sup>2</sup> The same critic says elsewhere:

What has become of our mothers’ conception of the man of letters—that Murgerism which, as a synonym of irregular habits and dissipation, caused them such fear? Nowadays we form and inculcate in our children quite a different idea of literary life. At a time when all bourgeois take pride in being artists, it is natural that the artists should exchange courtesies with them.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Claudine, speaking of Vétheuil, says to the Count: “I don’t believe him capable of committing a caddish deed,” to which the Count remarks: “That’s the finest praise you can give a man nowadays.” M. Donnay, *Amants*, i, 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Dec. 31, 1904.

<sup>3</sup> *Nos Femmes de Lettres* (1912), p. 103. Alfred Capus points out that dramatic authors are no longer young *déclassés* who have been expelled from the regular professions for lack of financial means, but young bourgeois, who prepare themselves early in life for journalism and dramatic work. “*Le Monde des Artistes*,” *Figaro*, Feb. 19, 1912:

## Artists in Recent French Literature

Given, then, the artist's traditional egotism and vanity, his susceptibility and jealousy, his claim of superiority and exclusiveness, his conviction, no matter how bourgeois he be, that he belongs to a select class endowed with the flame of genius,—how will these traits affect him as a member of society? What influence will they have upon his congeniality and his home life? While numerous other authors have dealt with the foibles and weaknesses of artists, it is significant that the author of *Ménages d'Artistes* almost alone considers these with reference to the artist's family life. So here in this three-act comedy produced in 1890 by Antoine at the Théâtre Libre, we see at the very beginning of Brieux's serious dramatic work, one of his fundamental traits. His concern about the integrity of the family, in the interests of the child, forms the fulcrum of his social system. In *Ménages d'Artistes* appears the guiding principle of his later plays. Henceforth, whatever be the social problem under consideration, he looks at it largely in its relation to the welfare of the future generation.

In the opening scene of the play, Jacques Tervaux is reading his poetry, *Les Flavescences*, to select friends and admirers. His wife, Louise, a woman without literary pretensions, explains to her mother, Mme. Legrand, that one of the guests, Mlle. Vernier, is a wealthy orphan whom she knew at boarding-school. Mme. Legrand, a sturdy, outspoken woman from the "provinces,"



discovers that, after running through Louise's dowry, Jacques is living from the allowance which she grants her daughter. But an artist's duty, Louise declares, is to persevere: her husband cannot fail to become famous some day.

In the admirers who surround Tervaux, Brieux has painted a gallery of portraits worthy of Paileron. There is Pingoux, the brilliant reporter of *L'Étoile des Arts*, an organ of the music-halls. There is the flatterer Tombelain, a young fop who flits about repeating his laudatory formula in praise of *Les Flavescences*: "Hugo? a microbe in comparison!" Then there is Divoire, who calls Tervaux's masterpiece a sensational rejuvenation of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*, and Mme. Divoire, who, while her children are crying for bread, thinks that an artist requires a life of nervous excitation, without which inspiration will not come. Davenay, on the other hand, makes himself conspicuous by putting *Les Flavescences* only in a class with *La Légende des Siècles*. Another less enthusiastic admirer of Tervaux is d'Estombreuse, who as leader of the synthetic movement naturally thinks that only a synthesist can produce a great literary work; hence his reserves regarding *Les Flavescences*. Alexandre Veule, too, an exponent of the *Tri-unionisme Sirupescient* theory of poetry, who says that every idea, every person, every object, possesses a colour and a musical tonality, has his reservations. According to his jugglery of words, *Tri-unionisme*



*Sirupescent* resembles synthesism, but is still more vague.

Veule is surprised to find in "mademoiselle" Vernier his former wife. She absorbs Tervaux's entire attention, and in congratulating him, she says that France possesses one more great poet. It goes without saying that in private Jacques's other admirers tell a different story: ". . . Between you and me, Tervaux's poetry is thin stuff," etc.<sup>1</sup> Mme. Legrand, who pretends no more than her daughter to understand poetry, wants Jacques to accept a commercial position, but he speaks of the artist's sacred mission, of the poetic flame that he feels within him. With the spicy *pot-au-feu* philosophy of certain of Molière's characters, Mme. Legrand always has the laugh on her side.

In Act II, troubles press on Mme. Tervaux. She has to confess to her mother that they owe a year's rent and will soon be turned into the street; she becomes convinced that her husband has a liaison with "mademoiselle" Vernier, her school friend, Emma, but on account of her daughter, Gabrielle, a girl of sixteen, she refuses to seek a divorce. Emma assures Louise, in the name of their former friendship, that she is not Tervaux's mistress, and when he proposes an elopement,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Histoire Com. de Francion* (Book V), where the hero says of his *confrères*: "When I read my poetry to them, they declared it perfect, but behind my back they attacked it fiercely. Each assumed this same attitude toward all the others."

she advises him to stay with his family. From personal experience she knows that the wives of most artists are to be pitied. For when a young woman thirsting for ideals, dreaming of poetry and romantic love, she married the so-called poet, Alexandre Veule. But his poetry existed only in his imagination. Neglected by him for low women, Emma took another companion, a business man, who has just left her a considerable sum of money. Jacques now apologizes to his wife, and Louise rushes into his arms with sobs. Here the play might have ended, had it not been for Mme. Legrand, who "cleans house," sending the unwelcome visitor's belongings down into the street. Jacques protests and elopes with Emma.

Act III takes place in the office of the *Journal des Poètes Mondains*, a publication founded by Emma. Jacques is editor-in-chief. Most of the admirers of Act I are consecrating their talent to the *Journal*, though the ironical tone of their conversation indicates their opinion of "Madame" and her editor. Divoire's family has sunk to abject poverty because, discouraged by his literary failures, the husband has become a drunkard. Jacques's financial situation, likewise, is desperate, yet he refuses to return to his family, on the ground that it is too late. His sole hope of obtaining financial aid is Emma. But the irony with which she replies to his appeals only exasperates him: "*Un poète, toi! Tu n'es qu'un arrangeur de mots. Un homme de talent, toi! Tu n'es qu'un raté!*"

She takes her jewelry and flees with her former husband, who has abandoned "poetry."<sup>1</sup>

Deserted by his companion, abandoned by collaborators and employés, and unwilling to go back to his wife and daughter, the once famous author of *Les Flavescences* commits suicide by throwing himself under a street car.

The *dénouement* is the weak point of the play; it is illogical and unnatural. Except in rare cases, suicide is the last resource of an author at bay. Inasmuch as Tervaux's wife, who grieved over his desertion, was still willing to pardon him, Jacques's logical course would have been to return to her. But the pessimism of the time, and especially the cynical *comédie rosse* in vogue at the Théâtre Libre, demanded an unhappy ending. Evil always seems nearer the truth than good. That is why the word naturalism, in its distorted meaning, was applied to works which greatly mutilated nature.<sup>2</sup> The *élite* who constituted the Théâtre Libre cared only for the perversity in human nature. Their Renanesque dilettantism had degenerated into Epicurean skepticism,<sup>3</sup> so that nothing but a brutal conclusion appealed to their

<sup>1</sup> There is a certain resemblance between Emma Vernier and Dinah de la Baudraye, Balzac's heroine in *La Muse du Département*. Dinah, called the "Queen of Sancerre," thanks to her literary taste, deserts her provincial home to live in free love with a journalist in Paris. But at the end of six years, she is glad to return to her husband, who has become a peer of France.

<sup>2</sup> G. Pellissier, *Rev. Bleue*, May 23, 1896.

<sup>3</sup> R. Doumic, *Deux Mondes*, Jan. 15, 1900.

blunted literary sensibility. Brieux knew well enough that a concession to their taste was necessary in the final act. We cannot blame him for making this concession; for a dramatist's first necessity, if not his duty, is to please.<sup>1</sup> A dramatic work does not really exist until it is presented on the stage, where the author and the audience can collaborate. And true collaboration is possible only when the audience is pleased.<sup>2</sup>

But even were the play more faulty in its art, it would still be interesting for its theme. This is indicated in the dispute between Tervaux and Mme. Legrand:

*Jacques:* Either a man is a poet or he is not.

*Mme. Legrand:* But what if he thinks he is one when he is not? Has he the right to make his wife suffer? Has he the right to ruin his children?

To present this truth, it was necessary only to show that certain "artists" are mere failures (*ratés*) or vain poseurs (*cabotins*).<sup>3</sup> Brieux makes clear the hardships of family life patiently endured by their victims. He ridicules the charitable theory that "an artist is a big child," and satirizes the plea that dissipation is necessary for poetic inspiration. In doing so he probably is

<sup>1</sup> R. Dounic, *ibid.*, Jan. 15, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> Brunetière regarded this necessity of pleasing as the dramatist's pitfall. *Manuel*, p. 519.

<sup>3</sup> In *La Déserteuse*, Brieux's composer, whom the provincials flatteringly call "*maître*," is both a *raté* and a *cabotin*.

not attacking Murger's well-known work, for the author of *The Latin Quarter* claims only that the irregular life led by his heroes is "a necessity that life forces upon them."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Murger's heroes, essentially bourgeois with only a Bohemian veneering, are too harmless to justify satire.<sup>2</sup> Still Brieux may owe to Murger's work—one of the books, we know, that as a boy he pored over under the gaslight on the stairway<sup>3</sup>—at least the idea of numerous contemporary allusions.<sup>4</sup> With the terms *tri-unionisme* and *synthétisme*, however, he does attack the symbolists and the *décadents*. Alexandre Veule's affected obscurity makes him what La Bruyère calls a *diseur de phébus*, modernized and now the exponent of a theory.<sup>5</sup> He is no more fantastic than the poet of whom Anatole France writes:

I am sure that the young author of *Le Traité du Verbe* is quite in earnest when, assigning to the sound of each vowel a characteristic colour, he says: *A black, E white, I red, U green, O blue*. Unfortunately, M. Ghil maintains that O is blue, and M. Rimbaud asserts that O is red. And these two charming patients

<sup>1</sup> *Vie de Bohème*, ch. i.

<sup>2</sup> It is in *Les Réfractaires* (1865), by Jules Vallès, that we see Bohemian life in its vivid reality.

<sup>3</sup> Adrien Bertrand, *E. Brieux*, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> It is more likely, however, that this feature is due to Bourget's *Le Disciple* (1889).

<sup>5</sup> Brieux probably has in mind the symbolist Charles Morice, who in his *Littérature de tout à l'heure* (1889), professes to formulate a "synthetic" poetry based on dream and abstraction.



dispute in the indulgent presence of M. Stéphane Mallarmé.<sup>1</sup>

A few other matters in *Ménages d'Artistes* deserve attention, because they foretell what were to be characteristics of either the mechanism or the spirit of most of Brieux's dramatic work.

The "reasoner," or mouthpiece of the author's opinions, reappears. This rôle, a favourite with playwrights of the middle of the nineteenth century, was strictly proscribed by the naturalists, who affected contempt for Augier, Dumas *fils*, and their immediate predecessors. In the first two acts, Mme. Legrand is the author's spokesman; then Dr. Meilleret represents him. The grandmother's energetic procedure at times makes the play verge on farce. Certain of her spicy remarks are simply *mots d'auteur* interspersed in the dialogue to keep the audience in good humour. After the failure of the naturalist drama, Brieux knew that theatre-goers soon wearied of a too sombre picture of life. Meilleret, on the other hand, raises the tone of the play with his dignity and discretion, notwithstanding Doumic's remark that the first characteristic of a "reasoner" is to

<sup>1</sup> *Vie littér.*, ii, p. vi. <sup>2</sup>*Le Traité du Verbe* is by René Ghil, a disciple of Mallarmé. According to the futurist painters, who have developed these niceties of sound and colour, the sounds and odours in railway stations, factories, and garages are red, while in restaurants, cafés, and parlors they are silvery, yellow, violet. The sounds, noises, and odours of animals are yellow, blue, etc. A. Séché, *Le Désarroi de la Consc. fr.*, p. 46.



be *insupportable*.<sup>1</sup> Without much justification, the same critic spoke some years earlier of the rejection of this rôle as an accomplished fact. But Brieux is not the only recent playwright who has refused to discard this convenient creation of his predecessors. The "reasoner" has seldom had a more prominent part than that assigned to the Baron in Donnay's *Paraître* (1906). Likewise, Hervieu, Lavedan, and Capus have all made use of him.

Then Brieux's treatment of Mme. Tervaux, Louise, is significant. At first she thought herself obliged to accept her husband's liaison with "mademoiselle" Vernier. But the author suggests a decisive stand. If Jacques refuses to mend his ways, he will have only himself to blame. Here we see in germ Brieux's conception of woman's dignity. When right is on her side, she must assert herself. But when she is half to blame, even though herself a victim of circumstances, as we shall see in the case of Julie, in *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont*, then she must make concessions.

Another incident shows how Brieux understands the spontaneous *bonté du peuple*. When Tervaux's collaborators and employés refused to lend Divoire a louis, one of the office boys came timidly to Divoire's rescue with ten francs. The drama in which Brieux's sympathetic attitude towards the common people has received its most complete expression is *Résultat des Courses*. Here their

<sup>1</sup> *Deux Mondes*, Sept. 15, 1906.

generosity and naïve *bonhomie* constitute the best feature of the play. When, however, it is the dramatist's purpose to represent the bourgeois as a dupe, this *bonhomie* may assume the form of resourceful peasant cunning.<sup>1</sup>

A remarkable feature of *Ménages d'Artistes* is the absence of tirades against the egotism of the bourgeoisie. However, from the nature of things, the object of censure is rather the absence of bourgeois qualities. Here Brieux is in contrast to Strindberg, who, in his *Red Room*, a similar theme, indulges in the bitterest invectives against the egotism and hypocrisy of the much-abused bourgeoisie. In this, as in other respects, Brieux's fair, broad-minded attitude indicated a change for the better in the naturalist drama.

Most important of all is what Jules Lemaître calls, despite the farcical treatment of Mme. Legrand and some caricature of the artists, the sincere and somewhat austere sentiment of the play.<sup>2</sup> Brieux may not have been original in introducing this sentiment. A moral improvement was in the air just at this time, according to André Maurel, who rejoiced to think that Renan's assertion, "The theatre of today is only a substitute for the cabaret," would soon need revision.<sup>3</sup> Some improvement was imperatively necessary; for this same year, Augustin Filon, writing from his retreat in England, and hence a

<sup>1</sup> *Les Remplaçantes, Les Avariés, Le Bourgeois aux Champs.*

<sup>2</sup> *Impressions*, vii, 287. <sup>3</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, May 10, 1890.

little behind the times, remarked that in France the novel had become the sole literary genre.<sup>1</sup> With his series of plays beginning with *Menages d'Artistes*, Brieux has done more than any one else to give weight and dignity to contemporary French drama.

Brieux's satire on artists is only one of several works dealing with the same subject. In almost every case the author has purposely exaggerated and distorted reality. But beneath this caricature invariably lies a reason. A glance at a few of these plays and novels will make clearer the nature of Brieux's artists.

Pailleron's comedy, *Cabotins* (*Vain Poseurs*, 1894), is one of the most humorous of such works. The central character, M. de Laversée, who is supposed to be writing a monumental work on Murillo, is a "modest but thrifty soul, who pumps his guests and out of their opinions makes obscure volumes on æsthetics, in order some day to sit in his late uncle's seat at the Institute." He takes under his protection a sculptor from his uncle's electoral district, launches his political campaign, creates an artificial movement in favour of his candidacy, and enters the Institute in triumph, if

<sup>1</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, March 1, 1890. That Filon's impression was shared at this time and even later by critics on the Continent, is evident from the attitude of Joseph Reinach, whose reports on the literary movement in France appeared in *The Athenæum*. M. Reinach's report for 1891-1892 devotes only a few words to the drama, and his articles for the years 1892-1895 completely ignore this genre.

not by the *Pont des Arts*, at least through the *Palais-Bourbon*.<sup>1</sup>

One of Pailleron's types is Grigneux, whose specialty is reproductions of *La Joconde*.<sup>2</sup> Another is the novelist-dramatist Larvejol, whose fame depends on the willingness of the censor to prosecute him. Unique is Dr. Saint-Marin, a *bellâtre* and ladies' favourite who, in order to put himself before the public, sends messengers to prominent gatherings to inquire for him on behalf of some influential patient.<sup>3</sup> A sculptor, Pierre, on the contrary, is far too modest to be taken seriously, for as Doumic remarks, *cabotinage*, or posing, has become so general that those who seem least guilty at once arouse suspicion.<sup>4</sup>

Pailleron's characters are neither morally corrupt nor ferociously envious, for the reason that they belong to "La Tomate," a society for mutual admiration and advancement.<sup>5</sup> Indeed Pailleron,

<sup>1</sup> L. Chevallier says in all seriousness that *cabotins* are a permanent national peril, since their activity has spread to the lecture platform, where they easily crowd out able men. *Rev. Bleue*, Apr. 6, 1901.

<sup>2</sup> Grigneux recalls Taupin in Dumas's *Diane de Lys*.

<sup>3</sup> Similar tactics are employed by Murger's heroes, who at the café keep calling for the periodical edited by them until the proprietor subscribes. (*Vie de Bohème*, ch. xi.) In Maupassant's *Bel-Ami*, one of the characters always buys and leaves a copy of the journal containing the first chapter of his *Souvenirs* when he dines.

<sup>4</sup> *Deux Mondes*, Mar. 15, 1894.

<sup>5</sup> This society meets in a studio called "The Garlic Box," which corresponds to the "Flying Toad" in Sardou's *Rabagas*.



himself a "bourgeois to the core," and interested only in the bourgeoisie, could not be expected to represent his artists as vagabonds or like Lavedan's *viveurs*.<sup>1</sup>

In *Paraître* (1906), Maurice Donnay shows several instances of *cabotinage* ranging all the way from the innocent display of literary vanity to assassination. Yet his characters are not repulsive. As a rule they have been legally married by the curé or the mayor, but that fact does not prevent their having mistresses or *amants*. The artists, all in all, are more tarnished than in Brieux's play, though socially they belong to a more elegant class. Donnay's literary type is Mme. Hurtz, author of *Les Lèvres Humides* (*The Moist Lips*), a work described by one of her worshippers as "a masterpiece . . . without parallel, delightful, exquisite. . . . Nothing like it has ever been written. . . ." When the novelist's admirers, in their adoration, literally place themselves at their idol's feet, she protests but feebly, indicating that she expected even greater manifestation.

Donnay who, like Sarcey, Doumic, Paul Flat, Jules Lemaître, and Alfred Capus, delights in taking a fling at the snobinettes for their ex-

<sup>1</sup> To Jean Blaize we owe another delightful satire on *cabotins*. In *Les Planches* (1888), he studies the vanity of comedians. Noteworthy is the case of Adrien Dul, an actor, who attempts to utilize subsequently on the stage the tragic facial and vocal expressions which came to him naturally on the death of his mother.

travagant admiration of foreigners, makes Mme. Hurtz a Tunisian and her ecstatic admirers all women. Sarcey declared apropos of *Pelléas et Mélisande* that, if the piece had been signed by a French name, it would doubtless never have been played in Paris, and that if it had been produced, it would have been hissed by three fourths of those who were ecstatic over it at the performance.<sup>1</sup> This corroborates Doumic's assertion that certain French dramatic critics "go into raptures" as soon as it is a question of a foreign author.<sup>2</sup> Paul Flat avers that for twenty years the best works signed by French names were deliberately sacrificed for foreign productions.<sup>3</sup> Alfred Capus cites the case of Henri Fabre, the great entomologist, who enjoyed international fame for many years before being "discovered" by the snobs in France.<sup>4</sup>

*Un Raté* (1891), a novel by Gyp, is the story of Ganuge, a young "poet" who, after displaying much affected melancholy and reverie at the expense of his credulous admirers, lures Mme. Suzanne Myre to a fatal *guet-apens*, because she cannot decide to become his mistress in deed as well as in name. This young *décadent* dislikes particularly authors who produce tangible works.

<sup>1</sup> *Quarante Ans de Théâtre*, viii, p. 422.

<sup>2</sup> *Deux Mondes*, July 15, 1913.

<sup>3</sup> *Nos Femmes de Lettres*, p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> *Figaro*, July 29, 1912. One of Capus's characters in *Institut de Beauté* says: "Paris is no longer in France, it is in Europe."



He regards simplicity and clearness of style as pernicious. His elegant verse, it is said, remains unpublished. He is preparing a remarkable work, *La Raréfaction Vibratile du Moi*. Though he lives near Nancy, Ganuge belongs to a *cénacle* in Paris, where he poses as a prophet. We are told that "the greater part of the young literary school has transformed itself into a society for mutual admiration. Its members owe their reputation to works which have never existed, yet they finally take their fame seriously." Suzanne is a *femme incomprise*, who thinks her husband, a banker, too bourgeois. She is obsessed by the profundity of Ganuge's genius, but for some mysterious reason she always refuses to take the final step in her liaison with the young *raté*. The motive of his homicide is "to gain celebrity, to astonish the gallery to which he played."<sup>1</sup>

This attack is directed both against the corruption of the elegant class of provincial society and the pose of certain young *décadents*. The portrait of the "poet" is clever and well executed. His *Raréfaction Vibratile du Moi* is a parallel master-

<sup>1</sup> In *Flipote* (1893), Jules Lemaître satirizes the vanity and *cabotinage* of a young actress, who disparages her *confrères* and thinks herself the "centre of the universe." Flipote marries a mediocre actor, to whom she secretly transfers a part of her salary, in order to mitigate his humiliation. But the revelation of this secret and the young wife's jealousy undermine their *ménage*, which in the final scene is broken up with the inelegant epithets *pître* and *cabotine*, hurled respectively at each other by the contracting parties.

piece to Tervaux's *Les Flavescences*. But in Gyp's novel the evil consequences of social and moral depravity are not reflected in home life. While Brieux depicts children crying for bread, and wives driven to despair by their husbands' dissipation, Suzanne's children are scarcely mentioned. It is possible that Anatole France, who considers Gyp a great philosopher,<sup>1</sup> owes to her the suicide episode in his *Histoire Comique* (1903).<sup>2</sup>

Satire on poseurs in mutual admiration societies is not confined to contemporary or even very recent French authors. In *La Camaraderie* (1837), Scribe satirized intrigue as practised by a society for mutual advancement, among whose members were a peer of France, an aristocratic man of letters, a poet-novelist, a painter, a publisher, and a now admired poet who formerly failed in law.<sup>3</sup> Another, a brilliant young lawyer, had been so maligned and slandered by the members of the Society that he thought seriously of ending his life. But once a "comrade," he was elected to

<sup>1</sup> *Vie littér.*, ii, 257.

<sup>2</sup> The story has to do with the Odeon Theatre in Paris. One of the comedians, Chevalier, jealous of his rival, whom Chevalier's former mistress, an actress, now prefers to him, commits suicide in the presence of the lovers. At the funeral it is learned that Chevalier, as a true *cabotin*, "killed himself merely to create notoriety" (p. 196).

<sup>3</sup> All these "comrades" are "great," a feature noted later by Murger, who speaks of "Gustave, le grand philosophe, Marcel, le grand peintre, Schaunard, le grand musicien et Rodolphe, le grand poète." *Vie de Bohème*, ch. xi.

Parliament, and the Peer gave him his only daughter in marriage.

If Scribe's comedy, often conventional and colourless, is too light, excessive seriousness, on the contrary, mars *Charles Demailly* (1858), a novel by the Goncourt brothers which was dramatized in 1892 by Paul Alexis and Oscar Méténier. The chief characters are Demailly, a man of letters, and Marthe, an actress whom he marries. She proves to be not the virtuous woman Charles thought her, but a deceitful, revengeful *cabotine*, who betrays him and wrecks his life. Other artists who appear are mostly journalists, one of whom, Nachette, becomes Marthe's lover.

The authors picture journalistic life less vividly than Brioux, and they are concerned far less with the vanity of artists than with the perversity of woman, for as true misogynists they regard woman's influence as disastrous to the artist. Edouard Rod shared this view, at least as long as he was in the naturalist camp. In *La Femme d'Henri Vanneau* (*The Wife of Henri Vanneau*, 1884), Rod emphasizes as one of the difficulties likely to be encountered by the true artist the danger of choosing an uncongenial helpmate. Vanneau's wife, a bourgeoisie without artistic taste, but bent on his immediate success, drags him, in her wish to curry favour with the critics, into a coterie of *cabotins*. In spite of his remonstrances regarding the dignity of both woman and art, poor Vanneau is caught in such a net of

intrigue and *cabotinage* that, despairing of domestic happiness as well as artistic fame, he dies a martyr to the cause of art.<sup>1</sup>

If the artist himself does not suffer, the woman may. It is her side of the case that Henry Bernstein gives us in *Le Bercail* (*The Fold*, 1904).

Éveline Landry, a *femme incomprise*, elopes with Jacques Foucher, a novelist, abandoning her husband and her little son. In the second act, the lovers have been living together for four years. Éveline desires a quiet life, but Foucher, claiming that he can work only in a gay atmosphere, associates with "artists" of the most questionable character. We feel exceedingly grateful to Bernstein for limiting to one act this milieu in which Éveline fails to find happiness, for he slashes with his characteristic brutality. Modesty and industry are the least prominent characteristics of his "artists." Léon Lièvre, a young fop, declares that the Government will make itself conspicu-

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes an author will make his characters express opinions similar to those of Rod and the Goncourts without sharing them himself. It is unlikely, for instance, that Jules Lemaître agrees with his actress, Flipote, when she says: "A woman artist should never marry" (*Flipote*, iii, 4), or that Saujon represents Marcelle Tinayre in his boutade, "When an artist falls madly in love, he is done for: the great artist is a great egotist" (*La Maison du Péché*, ch. xxiii). Cernay, however, who in *Le Lys*, by P. Wolff and G. Leroux, emphatically condemns the marriage of artists, is probably the authors' spokesman. In Lucien Descaves's early novel, *La Teigne* (*The Moth*), we see a talented artist's life eaten away by a former mistress, who has become his wife.



ously ridiculous if the Minister fails to decorate him the next Fourteenth of July. If again refused recognition, he will stop publishing poetry for a year, that will bring the Minister to his senses. Foucher himself, formerly a literary giant, produces nothing more because he is always going to begin his new work the next day or the next week. Unable longer to endure his gilt *pêches à quinze sous*, Éveline leaves him, with almost the very words of Emma Vernier to Tervaux: "*Tu es un raté! Tu es un rien du tout!*"<sup>1</sup>

Henry Bataille's play, *La Femme Nue* (*The Nude Woman*, 1908), portrays life among painters. Pierre Bernier, having won the medal of honour, marries his model, Loulou, who has made heroic sacrifices out of devotion to him. Pierre, whose fame depends somewhat on the critical opinion of the *Figaro*, becomes the favourite artist of fashionable society; but Loulou remains the simple, intensely devoted woman that she was. Pierre's liaison with a "princess" drives his young wife to attempted suicide.

Both *Le Bercail* and *La Femme Nue* attribute virtually the same characteristics to artists as *Ménages d'Artistes*—Bataille's play the more

<sup>1</sup> *Le Mari Rêvé* (1896), a novel by Julien Berr de Turique, tells a similar story of the novelist Raoul Périgné and his young wife, Marguerite. Their happiness would be complete if Raoul were not obliged, either by temperament or the necessities of art (and we get the impression that the latter is the case), to work in collaboration with others and travel to distant lands. Marguerite who, like Éveline Landry, desires to live with her artist in retirement, finds that a woman "never marries her ideal."

seriously, because it is free from the caricature which is mingled with the earnestness of Brieux's. To a greater degree than *Ménages d'Artistes* it gives the impression of reality. Bataille is as much at home among painters as Brieux among journalists. In comparison with Brieux's drama, the social atmosphere of *Le Bercaïl* is higher—at least more elegant—but morally more corrupt. In contrast to Brieux, Bernstein pays almost no attention to family life—a thing too respectable, or rather too unusual, for his artists.

Though other plays and novels might be cited to show the importance in recent French literature of the theme which Brieux treats in *Ménages d'Artistes*, the works which we have now examined include portraits of artists of all kinds: poets, dramatists, novelists, painters, sculptors, musicians, actors, critics, journalists. The literary characters should suffice to give an idea of men of letters, if not as they are, at least as they are represented by recent French writers, and only such men of letters concern us. If, then, we seek the predominant traits of authors as imagined by authors, the answer is: vanity, egotism, jealousy, and the desire to pose—in other words, essentially the same weaknesses attributed to Brieux's sorry specimens in *Ménages d'Artistes*.<sup>1</sup> Indeed Brieux,

<sup>1</sup> Exceptions are *Charles Demailly*, *La Femme d'Henri Vanneau*, and *La Teigne*, in which the hero, a sympathetic character, becomes a victim of woman's perversity and bourgeois stupidity. But this naturalist view represents only a minor tendency.



in considering the artist as a member of society, tells virtually all that is to be said about him, though here his satire lacks the delicate touch that he reveals a little later in *Les Bienfaiteurs*. Substantially all the weaknesses which other writers attribute to artists, especially literary artists, appear in his characters. Thus at the outset of his success as a playwright he gives promise of a comprehensiveness which, when fully developed in such plays as *Blanchette*, *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont*, and *La Robe Rouge*, makes him the most significant author of French social drama today.

If we allow ourselves a more general consideration of our theme, we may hazard the opinion that the harsh treatment of men of letters in the drama is only natural, for we seek at the theatre a pleasure which arises out of the misfortunes of our fellow-creatures.<sup>1</sup> In general, moralists naturally see the blameworthy side of things.<sup>2</sup> It is the essence of comedy to concern itself with society and social institutions for the purpose of criticising them.<sup>3</sup> But with all allowance for the exaggeration of the drama, Brunetière is probably right in asserting that the mania for "cutting a figure" has always been a typical weakness of French authors.<sup>4</sup> It was caustically satirized

<sup>1</sup> J. du Tillet, *Rev. Bleue*, Oct. 8, 1898.

<sup>2</sup> T. de Wyzewa, *ibid.*, Mar. 24, 1894.

<sup>3</sup> R. Doumic, *Deux Mondes*, Jan. 15, 1899.

<sup>4</sup> "La Litt. Personnelle," *ibid.*, Jan. 15, 1888. After mention-

as early as 1623 by Charles Sorel, whose hero says of his *confrères*: "They are the most presumptuous people in the world. Each thinks himself superior to all others, and gets angry when any one disagrees with him."<sup>1</sup> Coming to the nineteenth century, we find that Frédéric Loliée, in charging specific French men of letters with vanity and egotism, attributes the origin of such fatuity to the encyclopædists of the eighteenth century, but says that it reached its "epidemic" stage only with the romanticists and their successors.<sup>2</sup> He declares that La Bruyère's maxim, "A man of little sense believes his writings divine; a man of good sense thinks at most that his work is reasonable,"<sup>3</sup> is quite forgotten, or rather replaced by Rule I of Scribe's "comrades": "Each does himself justice; he knows his own worth."<sup>4</sup> After passing in review the arch-egotists Chateaubriand and Hugo, M. Loliée says that Stendhal, Vigny, Cousin, Pierre Leroux, Auguste Comte,

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ing in support of his assertion the abundant correspondence, memoirs, and diaries of French literature, Brunetière declares that the literature of France possesses a richer collection of confessions than all others combined.

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Com. de Francion*, Book v.

<sup>2</sup> "La Modestie des Gens de Lettres," *Rev. Bleue*, Aug. 30, 1902. "Formerly," observes Jules Guillemont, "a writer was only a narrator. Far from envying his heroes the pleasure of constituting the centre of interest, he kept himself in the background." ("Le 'Moi' dans la Litt. contemp.," *Rev. Bleue*, Mar. 22, 1884.) Pascal says: "*Le Moi est haïssable.*"

<sup>3</sup> *Caractères*, ch. i.

<sup>4</sup> *La Camaraderie*, ii, 6.

Maupassant, Edmond de Goncourt, Leconte de Lisle were obsessed, to a lesser degree, by this same vanity.<sup>1</sup> Jules Lemaître writes of Lamartine: "*Il prend des poses.*"<sup>2</sup> We are told that Balzac "had an enormous, childish vanity, thirsty for reputation and renown."<sup>3</sup> Another critic speaks of Flaubert's "extremely ready scorn for everything that he disagreed with."<sup>4</sup> As for the younger generation, Doumic accuses them of presuming to discover America every morning.<sup>5</sup>

This self-sufficiency and personal superiority would be complete, were it not for the competition of dangerous rivals. For notwithstanding the unruffled bliss of Pailleron's *cabotins* in their society of "La Tomate," it is evident that not all authors belong to the same society for mutual admiration, though Alfred Capus does remark that they are all united by one common bond: mutual contempt.<sup>6</sup> According to a saying of La Bruyère: "Such as by their circumstances are free from the jealousies of authors, have other cares or passions to divert them."<sup>7</sup> It has been

<sup>1</sup> In the case of Maupassant, however, M. Maynial thinks that "ceux qui ont parlé de morgue, de pose, de snobisme, ont servi plus ou moins consciemment d'implacables rancunes." (*La Vie et les Œuvres de Maupassant*, p. 196.) Although M. Loliée is not, like a Gilbert, a Goncourt, or a Zola an author seeking vengeance, still it is regrettable that a man like Vigny should be accused of vanity.

<sup>2</sup> *Contemp.*, vi, 91.

<sup>3</sup> A. Le Breton, *Balzac*, p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> É. Faguet, *Flaubert*, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> *Deux Mondes*, Jan. 15, 1895.

<sup>6</sup> "Les Gens de Lettres," *Rev. Bleue*, Mar. 14, 1891.

<sup>7</sup> *Caractères*, ch. i.

maliciously hinted that Becque's jealous rivals consented to establish his fame only after it was certain that it could not injure them.<sup>1</sup> Zola speaks of the ferocious rivalry which his jealous artists endeavour to conceal by handshaking. Sandoz, his hero, says to his wife, after their artist-guests have departed: "You were right! we will not invite them all to dinner again; they would devour one another."<sup>2</sup>

The fatuity of authors, even if as extreme as certain exaggerations indicate, would find its justification in the intense mental and physical strain undergone by such men as Balzac, Flaubert, Taine, and Zola. The morbid Goncourts were frequently impressed by this fact.<sup>3</sup> Anatole France, too, thinks that the conditions of an author's existence became more exacting with the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Writers now feel obliged to keep in touch with the appalling mass of current literature, which of itself is an exacting task and makes Bohemian life well nigh impossible. One does not see how an author can still find time for

<sup>1</sup> J. Ernest-Charles, *Rev. Bleue*, July 21, 1900.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Œuvre*, chs. x-xi. Augustin Filon, writing as a critic of French literary history says: "Ce qu'on nous a donné de la correspondance de nos plus grands écrivains a été une déception. . . . Ils nous ont initiés aux vulgaires petits moyens à l'aide desquels ils cultivaient leur gloire, aux féroces jalousies littéraires qui faisaient d'eux, en secret, les ennemis de leurs maîtres, de leurs amis ou même de leurs disciples, pendant qu'ils les portaient aux nues en public." *Mérimée*, p. 167.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal*, June 3, 1872, and Feb. 25, 1886.

<sup>4</sup> *Vie littér.*, i, 93.



political activity, like Chateaubriand, Guizot, Lamartine, Thiers, and Hugo. Yet, in recent years Vogüé, Paul Déroulède, and Maurice Barrès have taken upon themselves this additional burden.<sup>1</sup>

To be sure, mental exertion, social and political activity may not constitute the artist's chief burden. Even writers of merit do not always receive recognition at once, and if hampered by financial difficulties, they may debate with themselves in all seriousness the question of "breaking their pen," as Jacques Tervaux expresses it.<sup>2</sup> It must be said to the credit of our time, however, that the Chattertons and the Hégésippe Moreaus (*Chien parvenu, donne-moi ton secret.*) have less reason for complaint than formerly.<sup>3</sup> If Vigny's "Docteur Noir" were to put on his glasses today, he would see things with less pessimism.

<sup>1</sup> Henri Bérenger considers this dual activity not only natural, but very desirable. After condemning the separation of literature and politics resulting from the theory of art for art's sake, he asserts that the present generation thinks men of letters have an immense responsibility. (*Rev. Bleue*, Jan. 20, 1897.) Chateaubriand, who was proud of his political rôle, always protested against the supposed incompatibility of literary genius and political talent. Cf. his *Congrès de Vérone*, vol. i, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Francion's conviction that "the Muses prefer a humble abode" (*IIist. Com. de Francion*, Book IV) is consoling and encouraging; but, as Alfred Capus has said, study the life of a merchant, a writer, a savant, an inventor; you will find that everywhere, at every moment, he is influenced by the rhythm of his initial start. *Mœurs du Temps*, i, 255.

<sup>3</sup> Renan tells us that Abel, one of the great mathematicians of the nineteenth century, died from neglect. *Essais de Morale et de Crit.*, p. 24.



But whatever the conditions of life at present, a poet must no longer expect leniency and sympathy from the world merely because he is a poet and not a bourgeois. That naïve fallacy of romanticism has long been exploded. Painting, writing, and composing music are no more meritorious than the work of the engineer, the doctor, or the notary.<sup>1</sup> The plea of Jacques Tervaux and his fellow-artists for a special code of moral indulgence meets with deaf ears in our disillusioned age.<sup>2</sup> "An author in hopeful expectation of a masterpiece," says Émile Faguet, "is much to be pitied, of course; but his are the trials of the *grand seigneur*, the trials of ambition and vanity."<sup>3</sup>

After all, the theme of literary vanity is more humorous dramatically than in reality. There are *ratés* and *ratés*. Some are vain, conceited, and indolent; others, conscientious and sincerely persuaded that they have talent when they have not.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. Thiesson, "Réflexions sur l'Art," *Effort Libre*, 1912, p. 486.

<sup>2</sup> "Assurément," Paul Janet declared long ago, "nous avons lieu d'être las aujourd'hui d'une théorie qui fait du désordre l'accompagnement nécessaire du génie." (*Deux Mondes*, Sept. 15, 1875.) Nor will François Coppée's *Ballade en Faveur des Ratés*, in which he generously offers to avenge them for the "coups de pied de l'âne et du bourgeois," change public sentiment.

<sup>3</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Jan. 9, 1892.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. André Mellerio's *raté* in *La Vie Stérile* (1892). Philippe Raymond has more money than literary talent. After vain attempts at bribing the Muses, he realizes that his brain is being hopelessly tortured and consumed (p. 201).

Human egotism naturally leads each author to think himself a favourite of the Muses. Unfortunately a Leconte de Lisle, a Nietzsche, a Renan, an Ibsen never formulated a criterion for determining just which mortals deserve to be classed with the *élite*, that is, with themselves. But let us continue to believe that at least such men as Legouv  , Pasteur, Taine, Henri Fabre, Alfred Fouill  e, and Mistral were sincerely modest, in spite of the assertion that "flattery is heightened in proportion as one seems to avoid it."<sup>1</sup>

In a certain sense a writer's theme may be indicative of modesty. For after such bewildering masterpieces as *Les Flavescences*, *Les L  vres Humides*, and *La Rar  faction Vibratile du Moi*, we are grateful for the refreshing contrast of certain works, whose authors, striking a less pretentious note, choose as subjects the humbler creatures of this world. Thus Baudelaire, Taine, Mme. Mich  let, and Fran  ois Copp  e write charmingly about their cats; L  on Cladel describes life with his dogs in the rugged region of his native Quercy; Maurice Maeterlinck deduces wholesome moral lessons from the life of the honey-bee; and Fran  ois Fabi   celebrates domestic animals and winged creatures of every kind. All readers of a work like Eug  ne Mouton's *Zoologie Morale* are benefited morally and socially. The names of dumb brutes, even though they be only a disguise, as in *Chantecler*,

<sup>1</sup> F. Loli  e, ref. quoted.

make us forget for a moment the egotistical superiority of man.<sup>1</sup>

Probably after all French men of letters are no more conceited than their *confrères* in other countries. But the French people, who are strictly opposed, in principle, to every form of commercial advertisement, naturally exaggerate the vanity and *cabotinage* of their authors. Their instinct for caricature would enable them to make a good showing even with a poor case. And literary critics are apt to share the zeal of Sainte-Beuve, who used to say that he was never satisfied until he discovered a great man's weakness.

<sup>1</sup> This principle explains, largely, the immense vogue of a work like Kipling's *Jungle Book*. After a long period of sex literature, with the indispensable theme of adultery, the human soul craves a change.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DÉCLASSÉS

*Blanchette* (Brieux)—*Michel Verneuil* (Theuriet)—*Le Ferment* (Estaunié)—*L'Étape* (Bourget)—*L'Inquiet* (Cornut)—*Maître Lardent* (Leroux-Cesbron)—*La Terre qui Meurt* (Bazin)—*Les Noëllet* (Bazin)—*L'Étude Chandoux* (Glouvet).

**E**MILE FAGUET asserts that nothing else affords the French people so much pleasure as heaping ridicule upon those who attempt to rise above their social station.<sup>1</sup> In the same vein, Augustin Filon speaks of "*ces affreuses crispations de cœur qui font, en France, une torture de l'existence des déclassés.*"<sup>2</sup> Probably no other French social question has caused so much envy, heartache, and despair, for no people feel ridicule quite so keenly as the French. According to Saint-Marc Girardin, indeed, rather than to expose themselves to ridicule, they prefer to deprive themselves of happiness and material comfort.<sup>3</sup>

Problems of social ambition are not new in France. They began to assume a serious aspect

<sup>1</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Apr. 13, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 10, 1891.

<sup>3</sup> *Deux Mondes*, Dec. 15, 1854.

in the second half of the seventeenth century, owing to influences which pulled both up and down. The nobility, neglecting their estates, flocked to the Court, thus hastening their financial and moral ruin. And the preference of Louis XIV for bourgeois officials naturally encouraged the Fourth Estate to seek admittance to the ranks of the bourgeoisie.

In the eighteenth century there were not equally strong causes to make the question of the "un-classed" acute. But in the nineteenth century, France became the country *par excellence* of the *déclassés*, as a result of the Great Revolution and its sequels terminating in the Third Republic. This condition was the inevitable consequence of making political equality the basis of the social organism in a country originally composed of widely divergent social elements. It is natural that the levelling egalitarian spirit, which tends to bring all classes to the same social plane, should cause infinite dislocations and meet with determined opposition, not only from the higher classes drawn downward, but also from those who happen to occupy the central plane of social gravity and hence strive to bar unwelcome intruders from below.

Under this levelling régime the nobility, deprived of both pecuniary assistance from the Crown and legalized distinction, assumed an attitude of sulking indifference, which in many cases degenerated into intellectual and industrial sloth.



The only course open to a ruined nobleman was to "regild" his escutcheon by an alliance with the new aristocracy—the wealthy bourgeoisie. Each alliance of this kind (and according to literary opinion they have been very numerous) unclassed both contracting parties.

Alliances of this nature attract less attention now than they did formerly; in the France of our time, the nobility may be considered a relatively unimportant class. Students of social problems are concerned chiefly with the common people and the lower bourgeoisie, the classes which constitute a large majority of the population. If these classes are benefited by rising socially, then well and good. But do they all bless their social elevation? On this subject certain French authors have expressed decided opinions, and their verdict constitutes our highest authority. This was the subject that led Brioux to write *Blanchette*, which was produced two years after *Ménages d'Artistes*.

Robert de Chantemelle<sup>1</sup> plausibly divides the unclassed into the *déclassés d'en haut* and the *déclassés d'en bas*. The nobility, when unclassed, belong to the first group, represented in such dramas as *Le Gendre de M. Poirier* (Augier), *Mademoiselle de la Seiglière* (Sandeau), *Le Prince d'Aurec* (Lavedan), *Les Deux Noblesses* (Lavedan), *L'Émigré* (Bourget). Representing the second group are *Le Mariage d'Olympe* (Augier), *La*

<sup>1</sup> Fr. de Curel, *Les Fossiles*, ii, 2.

*Question d'Argent* (Dumas), *Michel Pauper* (Becque), *Blanchette* (Brieux), *Catherine* (Lavedan), *Le Détour* (Bernstein), *Samson*<sup>1</sup> (Bernstein). Émile Faguet distinguishes yet what he terms the "*surclassés*"—that is, persons who rise above their social station and succeed. Among works treating them may be mentioned *Le Fils Naturel* (Dumas), *Le Fils de Giboyer* (Augier), *Monsieur Piégois* (Capus), *Les Vainqueurs* (É. Fabre), *Le Cœur Dispose* (Croisset).<sup>2</sup> A peculiar type of *déclassé* may be distinguished in those natural children who reproach their parents for taking them out of the peaceful obscurity of the class in which they have begun life. Jacques Vignot, in *Le Fils Naturel*,<sup>3</sup> who afterward succeeds so brilliantly, says to his mother: "You ought to have made me an obscure labourer concerned only about his daily bread, with no other education except respect for his mother and his own reputation." We shall see that Lucienne Bertry in

<sup>1</sup> That is, from the standpoint of Jacques Brachard, a parvenu. His wife and the other members of the nobility are "unclassed from above." Frequently a drama may belong to both groups.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Bernstein (*Le Bercail*, i, 3) speaks humorously of a *déclassée* even in the matter of motherhood.

"*Eveline*: No, no, I do not love my child as other mothers love their children.

"*Foucher*: Because you were not ready for motherhood; because you had not gone through any of the preparatory stages; because you had known neither parental affection, nor family life, nor a man's love."

<sup>3</sup> Act II, sc. 6.

Brieux's *L'Évasion*<sup>1</sup> takes the same view of her situation.

Though Chantemelle's division of the unclassed seems reasonable, the transformations which French society has undergone since the Revolution, with the corresponding violent fluctuations in material welfare, have in part upset the old classifications. One of Alfred Capus's characters in *Monsieur Piégois* (1905), when stigmatized as a *déclassé*, says triumphantly: "The unclassed have become so numerous that they form regular classes of their own, which, like the others, have their rich and their poor, their victors and their vanquished."<sup>2</sup> It is true that while the posterity of the Dandins, the Jourdain, the Poiriers, and the Levraults<sup>3</sup> were continuing the old traditions, other types of unclassed developed. In this multiplication of such types, it is not strange that searchers for causes of social discontent have discovered victims of economic conditions. In certain cases they have felt justified in laying the blame for these unfortunates squarely upon the State for encouraging its peasantry to rise by means of education to a social class in which they cannot maintain themselves. It is therefore not surprising that the victims, for the most part

<sup>1</sup> Act III, sc. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Act I, sc. 6. In *Rosine*, an earlier drama by Capus, the hero declares that the unclassed are now the only people who enjoy life.

<sup>3</sup> Jules Sandeau, *Sacs et Parchemins*.

peasant children who owe their misfortunes to alluring promises of diplomas and the hope of attaining bourgeois distinction, should curse the credulity and vanity of their parents and the inconsistency of the State, which does everything to facilitate education, without making any provision for the future of those whom it has educated.

It is this deplorable lot of a young person unclassed by education which Brieux presented with such dramatic power in *Blanchette* (1892), that ever since his place has been secure in the first rank of contemporary French playwrights. The recent French novel frequently depicts the same bitter disappointment of young people who have put their faith in diplomas. The whole question is connected with the tendency of the rural population to desert the country for the city, in the hope of rising to the social life of the bourgeoisie.<sup>1</sup>

The scene of *Blanchette* is a village cabaret owned by "père Rousset," a peasant with incipient bourgeois pretensions. The problem is presented at the very outset, when M. Galoux, the County Counsellor, drops in and Rousset asks him what the Government intends to do for his daughter, Blanchette, who, though given her teacher's certificate six months before, has not been appointed to a position. Unhooking her diploma from the wall, the proud father says to

<sup>1</sup> "Oublieux des beautés du village natal,

"Beaucoup vont célébrant des cités de métal."

Fr. Jammes, *Géorgiques Chrétiennes*, Chant II.



M. Galoux: "There it is! What did the State mean by encouraging my daughter to go so far in education? All those competitive examinations, stipends, and promises, crowned by the supreme official acknowledgment with the Government seal and the official signatures,—were they not meant seriously?" Then the wily peasant considers the political consequences of such a breach of faith on the part of the Government. He is not asking a favour, but the payment, as it were, of a promissory note, of returns for money invested in his daughter's education. He reminds the Counsellor that he encouraged him to give Blanchette a good education, with the assurance that she would earn a good salary.

M. Galoux fully realizes Blanchette's rare attainments. His daughter, who knew her at boarding-school, is her best friend. But unfortunately, on the Prefect's<sup>1</sup> books there are many applicants registered ahead of Blanchette. However, he will see the Prefect about the matter.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A prefect is the highest civil official in the French geographical division called a "*département*."

<sup>2</sup> "Recommendation has become the Frenchman's religion. If, very often, this protection does no good, it at least enables the applicant to hope for a paradise of indolence and consoles him for his dupery." G. Deherme, *La Crise Sociale*, p. 179.

Formerly teachers were appointed by the Minister of the Interior through the Prefect of the particular department; but this objectionable system, which necessarily made the teacher dependent upon political favour, was abolished in 1914. According to the new law, the Prefect has nothing to do with the appointment of teachers.



It is high time that something be done, for Mme. Rousset, a timid woman, knows that her husband will not tolerate a "lady" about him very long. She is already frightened at her daughter's dreams of splendour. Blanchette hopes to marry her friend's brother, Georges Galoux, who, she fancies, will be elected to Parliament. Then she will have a political and literary salon with a *chambre Louis XV.*<sup>1</sup> These air castles make the young *déclassée* profoundly dissatisfied with her lot. Nevertheless, her parents, still labouring under their vain delusions, reject with derision the matrimonial suit of a blacksmith's son: "Ah, no! We did not educate our daughter to give her to a labourer like ourselves."<sup>2</sup>

At the opening of Act II, Blanchette, still

<sup>1</sup> In *Maison Neuve* (1866), Sardou emphasizes the baneful influence of the fashionable boarding-schools. Instead of receiving an education to fit her for her future shop-work, his heroine has learned dancing, music, painting, and poetical composition. The school has developed in her a romantic, overwrought imagination, with dreams of jewels, sumptuous residences, brilliant equipages, fêtes, and balls. But after associating in splendour with the daughters of marquises and of bankers, she is obliged to accept the prosaic realities of a shopkeeper's life—all on account of her father's vanity.

Essentially these same results of the modern education for girls are depicted by Alex. Debray in his comedy, *L'Enfant Gâtée* (1907). Cf. Albert Cim's novel, *Institution de Demoiselles*, which denounces as worse than worthless the education that the daughters of the titled and the moneyed aristocracy receive in the fashionable boarding-schools.

<sup>2</sup> P. Leroy-Beaulieu notes the disdain of young women of the lower classes, who have obtained their teacher's diploma, for peasant suitors. *Traité d'Écon. Pol.*, iv, 625.

without a position, has decided to utilize her knowledge at home. In view of her matrimonial hopes, the cabaret must be transformed into a stylish café, that the family may rise socially. Following the theories in her books on science, she induces her father to put fertilizer on his wheat; but, owing to her miscalculation, this results disastrously and arouses his anger. During a quarrel, a little later, Rousset strikes his daughter, but she remains defiant. When she complains about her situation, Mme. Rousset exclaims: "If you knew only just enough to read and write, you would not let imaginary trouble worry you." Thus Blanchette's education proves a misfortune for her parents as well as herself.<sup>1</sup>

Good news which M. Galoux brings does not make things better. There were at first two thousand candidates ahead of Blanchette, whereas now, he says, thanks to his influence, the number has been reduced to only 514.<sup>2</sup> Pending her appointment, he suggests that Blanchette should help his daughter in her studies. This attempted

<sup>1</sup> Giboyer says that "ce grand chemin de l'éducation, où notre jolie société laisse s'engouffrer tant de pauvres diables, est un cul-de-sac." (*Les Effrontés*, iii, 4.) Philippe Huguet, another of Augier's characters, criticizes those parents who think that they can provide for their children's future by placing in their hands "un diplôme, arme vaine." *La Jeunesse*, i, 2.

<sup>2</sup> "At the Prefecture of the Seine there are 7000 applications for 193 positions in the elementary schools." H. Clément, "Le Fonctionnarisme et la Dépopulation," *Rev. Bleue*, Dec. 26, 1909.

intercession only intensifies Rousset's rigour. After repeating his grievances—chief of which is Blanchette's failure to obtain a position—the stern old peasant gives her her choice: she must either do scrubbing and menial housework or leave home. Blanchette prefers to go.<sup>1</sup>

More than a year later, in Act III, Blanchette returns haggard and ill-clad. Rousset orders her to leave again, but she begs to stay. She relates that young Galoux wanted to make her his mistress, and that elsewhere her experiences were equally disappointing. In Paris, where there were ten girls for one day's employment, she could earn only a franc by working twelve hours. To be sure, there was a more lucrative profession which, as she observed, even certain girls with diplomas embraced.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Her mother's failure to defend her seems unnatural. She is intimidated by Rousset. In the French drama it is unusual for a girl to leave home except to elope with her lover. Mme. Lechat, dreading the thought of living alone with her husband, embraces Germaine affectionately when the girl departs. (*Les Affaires*, by O. Mirbeau.) Numerous are the instances in which a mother intercedes for her son, for according to Sully Prudhomme,

"Lorsque le père déshérite,

"La mère laisse ouverts ses bras."

When Brassier disowns his son (*Les Grands*, by P. Veber and S. Basset) the boy's mother swoons. Mme. Portal, in *Le Tribun* (Bourget), Mme. Baudouin, in *L'Apôtre* (Loyson), and Mme. Combarrieu, in *Mère* (Malot), each pleads for her son. When Adrien Perraud is driven from home by his father (*La Poigne*, by Jean Jullien), Mme. Perraud succumbs to heart failure.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the heroine's experience in *L'Écolière* (1901), by Jean Jullien. Albert Cim shows in his thesis novel, *Demoiselles*

Blanchette is now glad to accept the formerly scorned blacksmith's son as her fiancé. Yet when her father asks her whether it is a mistake to give one's children an education, she says that it is not. Only, their education should be something which they can use, instead of training for government employment.

This last act has been criticized as illogical. The defect, if there is any, consists in Blanchette's inability to make an independent living, rather than in her idealized virtue. Yet the latter has usually been considered the chief objection. Of course if the girl had succeeded alone, there could have been no third act. But the dramatic

à *Marier* (1894), that diplomas do not fit young women for the work of life, but rather make of them *déclassées* and *filles-mères* (p. 245). M. and Mme. Lemeslier find a good husband for their younger daughter, who has learned dressmaking; but nobody wants to marry her sister, Aline, "une fille si instruite, pour laquelle on avait fait tant de sacrifices, possédant tous ses brevets" (p. 146). At the end, after Aline has gone wrong—like Blanchette in the original version of Brioux's play—she sees hanging side by side on the wall her two large gilt-framed diplomas, *Brevet Élémentaire: Brevet Supérieur*, which now seem to jeer at her and insult her (p. 334). This novel is dedicated to Francisque Sarcey, whose sentiments it voices.

Similarly Hugues Le Roux, after a thorough investigation, concludes that "three fourths of the prostitutes are women who owe their fall to an education which has unclassed them." *Nos filles qu'en ferons-nous?* Ch. iv.

One of Forain's caricatures represents a scene in a house of prostitution. To her customer, who is examining with curiosity a parchment tacked to the wall, the girl says: "Ça, c'est mon brevet supérieur!"



situation required her return to the paternal threshold; otherwise the *déclassée* would not have merited our sympathy. That this situation strengthens the play is proved by the experiment of Antoine, who, in his tour of the "provinces," did in fact omit the third act. At that time, however, the present conclusion, which is a revised version, did not exist. The original piece, written for the Théâtre Libre, had a cynical ending. Blanchette became the mistress of young Galoux, and when her father, who had had bad luck, was about to have his mortgage foreclosed, she returned in a fine carriage and gave him financial assistance. It was due chiefly to Sarcey's influence that Brieux decided to change the third act. What made a pleasanter conclusion possible was the young woman's upright character, just as the spirit of pride and independence with which she was endowed contributed to her moral preservation. In view of these facts, the virtuous life that Blanchette leads amidst so many temptations and her subsequent humble attitude, are not entirely improbable. But in view of this very strength of character, her failure to succeed in Paris does not seem so probable.

In most respects of workmanship, *Blanchette* is far superior to *Ménages d'Artistes*. To be sure, we have seen that here again is a faulty ending; but then, it is a commonplace of criticism that one of the greatest difficulties of any writer is to conclude. Few plays have an impeccable con-



clusion. In a play like *Blanchette*, the details of the conclusion anyway are of secondary importance to the lesson. Since the heroine escapes prostitution only by renouncing her dreams of splendour, the lesson is not lost.

In the exposition of the play, on the contrary—here largely a mosaic of the little touches that make up the milieu—Brieux shows finer art than before. Already at this stage of his dramatic career he is a finished artist. We understand clearly who Rousset is, why he has given his daughter an education, and why he is furious over his disappointment. Blanchette's aristocratic plans and her father's determination not to tolerate a grand lady in his house indicate the conflict that must follow unless the Counsellor can arrange the matter with the Prefect.<sup>1</sup>

As to characterization, the recent drama offers nothing superior to "père Rousset." Admirable throughout, he does not say or do anything to mar the dramatic illusion. H. Pradalès says of him: "*Il est vrai et il est complet; tout le rural actuel*

<sup>1</sup> *La Mioche Dorée* (1906), a five-act drama by A. Lemonnier and L. Pericaud, treats the same theme as *Blanchette*. A peasant, "le père Rousset," has given his daughter, Marie, an education above her social station. Marie, who has a big dowry, marries a good-for-nothing Count, the cousin of Berthe, her school chum. Although unhappy with her titled husband, who makes love to Berthe, the young *déclassée* does not leave him, for fear he will take her child from her. When, however, the Count has run through her dowry, he commits suicide. Marie now returns to her father's home, at liberty to marry Jean Robin, a peasant who has loved her from youth.

*est là.*"<sup>1</sup> This is an unusual tribute to Brieux; for of all classes the peasant is admitted to be the most difficult to penetrate psychologically. Augier, Dumas, and Sardou never ventured to concern themselves with him. Critics are agreed that Zola's peasants have never existed; and Balzac's depressing exaggerations, owing to his lack of sympathy for the peasant, are as misleading as George Sand's idealizations. While not confining himself to any particular region, like a Theuriet, a Pouvillon, a Ferdinand Fabre, Brieux has created a veritable synthetic type of upper-class peasant.

Mme. Rousset, also, is true to life, though she is overshadowed by her husband. But the heroine, as already hinted, is much less lifelike than her parents. Certain of her air castles may well have been suggested to her by the author himself, who emphasizes too much her *ennui* and her boarding-school frivolity. Blanchette's plans for transforming the cabaret seem natural enough, but her interest in books on agriculture and economics surprises us, for she seems to have acquired very different tastes at school. Such books would harmonize poorly with her *salon Louis XV.* No, Blanchette's character is not consistent. At times, in the matter of obtaining a position, she is entirely helpless and without ambition; again she possesses the initiative and independent spirit of the "new woman." Antoine Benoist

<sup>1</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Dec. 14, 1901.

asserts that her character is purely conventional,<sup>1</sup> and Émile Faguet points out that girls who take up the teachers' profession usually have none of Blanchette's illusions, since they know that they must begin at a low salary. However, a dramatist does not necessarily choose a type representative of an entire class. As Mr. Clayton Hamilton has said,<sup>2</sup> the social drama sets forth a struggle between a radical exception and a conservative rule, the dramatist's business being merely to tell the truth about certain special characters involved in certain special situations. The heroes and the heroines of Dumas *films* are nearly all exceptional, though each is quite possible.<sup>3</sup> Blanchette's actions, after all, are by no means impossible.<sup>4</sup>

— Much as the *déclassés* have attracted the atten-

<sup>1</sup> *Le Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui*, i, 218.

<sup>2</sup> "The Mod. Soc. Drama," *Forum*, Sept., 1908.

<sup>3</sup> But a dramatist should avoid exceptional characters if he wishes to give a true image of manners.

<sup>4</sup> *Le Père Perdrix*, 1903, a novel by C. L. Philippe, has numerous features in common with *Blanchette*. A blacksmith, Bousset, sends his son, Jean, through college, in order to make him into a high-salaried bourgeois. Like Rousset, he is exceedingly proud of his son's attainments. Like Rousset, too, he reminds Jean of his financial sacrifices. Jean succeeds in obtaining a position, which, however, he loses at the end of one year. Now that he has become a "dead expense" at home, his father, like Brioux's peasant, soon lets him hear the price of table board. After a quarrel, Jean goes to live with "le père Perdrix," a sort of hermit. Nothing further is said about his education, for the reason that M. Philippe prefers to give his novel a humorous, ironical tone rather than to discuss social theories.

tion of French men of letters, Brieux's theme is original. *Blanchette* for the first time in French literature presents the unclassed as victims of economic conditions resulting from a misunderstanding, in regard to public instruction, between the State and the short-sighted ambition of its peasantry. To be sure, several years before, Theuriet had depicted in his novel, *Michel Verneuil* (1883), the failure of a peasant's son who endeavours to mount too high through education.<sup>1</sup> But Theuriet failed to realize the seriousness of the question. At the time, indeed, few writers did realize it, or what a little later students of social problems began to call the responsibility of society.

One of the underlying causes of this misunderstanding which Brieux considers, is Rousset's folly of expecting too much from the Government. This delusion is a heritage of the French people

<sup>1</sup> Verneuil, a peasant of Lorraine, led to believe that his son can obtain a government position that will pay better than farming, sends the boy, Michel, through college. Thanks to diligence and intelligence, Michel advances, notwithstanding the jeers of his polished classmates, till he is appointed to a *lycée* professorship in Tours, where he succeeds brilliantly, in spite of his uncouth peasant manners, which do not seem shocking to the provincials. Determined to make his mark in the world, the former peasant boy obtains a substitute professorship at the Sorbonne, but here he fails lamentably for want of tact, refinement, and culture. His lectures are too heavy for Parisian stomachs. Discouraged and humiliated, the *déclassé* returns to his provincial home, cursing the mania that impels the children of peasants to abandon the farm in the hope of becoming bourgeois.



dating from the absolute rule of their kings, which stifled individual initiative and accustomed everyone to regard the State as his necessary protector.<sup>1</sup>

Today, as formerly [says Hugues Le Roux] the man with a parchment summons the sovereign (the State) to provide a living for him. Condé joined the Spaniards against the King: the physician without patients, the lawyer without clients, the engineer without a factory march with the disorderly element against the State.

Le Roux likens the various diplomas of today to former titles, and says that the State must provide for persons holding degrees just as it formerly had to provide for the nobility.<sup>2</sup> Gabriel Séailles speaks of the reputation of the French people for making the State a providence and treating it as the savages do their fetiches, which they cover with insults and blows if their prayers are not answered at once.<sup>3</sup>

A striking instance of this attitude of the people was seen a few years ago during the vine-growers' disturbances. Owing chiefly to overproduction,

<sup>1</sup> Émile Faguet observes: "We owe this failing to two centuries of brilliant despotism, which led us to think that as individuals we were of no consequence, that everything was done by all, without our coöperation." *L'Horreur des Responsabilités*, p. 199. Cf.: A. Fouillée, *La France au point de vue moral*, p. 3; P. Bourget, *Essais de psych. contemp.*, i, 253; Duc de Broglie, *Étude de Litt. et de Morale*, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> *Nos Fils que feront-ils?*

<sup>3</sup> "Le Droit du Peuple à l'Instruction," *Rev. Bleue*, Nov. 27, 1897.



as impartial authorities maintained, the price of wine no longer paid the cost of vintage. In their distress, the inhabitants of the wine-producing departments of southern France demanded that the Government come to their rescue, and, to enforce their demands, they organized huge mass-meetings in 1907, threatening to break away from northern France. Urbain Gohier reports as follows an interview during this time with a prominent vine-grower of the South:

Why are your departments in revolt?—Because they want to compel the Government, Parliament, the State, to put an end to the crisis from which we are suffering.—By what means?—By taking measures.—What measures?—That's the Government's business. Let it hasten to save us, else we will not disarm.<sup>1</sup>

Odd as it seems that the State should be held responsible for such an economic depression, the pretensions of these vine-growers are, after all, not more unreasonable than those of "père Rousset," for his daughter has been acknowledged eligible to teach only if her services are needed.

We must not accuse Brieux, in maintaining in *Blanchette* that peasants who give their children an education may unclass them and do them injustice, of condemning education in itself. His own brilliant achievements refute this accusation. But because, as a general principle, it is legitimate

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from *Le Réveil*, by A. Séché, *Le Désarroi de la Cons. fr.*, p. 160.

for one peasant girl to try to rise above her class through education, it does not follow that all should be encouraged to do the same. The matter requires judgment, common sense, and a just estimate of one's capacity.<sup>1</sup> Only an intellectually superior girl should undertake to rise to a higher social station, and she must be sure how superior she is. Although Blanchette was superior to most of the girls in her canton, on the Prefect's application-books hundreds of other girls' names were registered ahead of hers.<sup>2</sup> This is no exaggeration of actual conditions. Taine in 1890, after quoting the statistics in the *Journal des Débats*<sup>3</sup> to the effect that in the department of Seine there were 7139 female applicants for fifty-four vacant positions, concluded: "Thus 7085 of these young women, who have been educated and given diplomas, not being able to obtain positions, must resign themselves to marriage with a labourer or serve as household maids, and so they are tempted to become women of the street."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Tout être a droit de chercher à s'élever au dessus de sa condition et de son milieu d'origine, pourvu qu'il soit, par le cœur et l'esprit, supérieur à ce milieu et à cette condition." Marquis de Ségur, reply to Brieux's *Discours de Réception*.

<sup>2</sup> These applicants were doubtless from the bourgeoisie. Émile Faguet declares that the infatuation of the lower bourgeoisie for the teacher's diploma is analogous to the mania of the common people for the dressmakers' trade. "Métiers Fém.," *Rev. Bleue*, March 5, 1904.

<sup>3</sup> Sept. 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Origines, Rég. Mod.*, ii, 290.

Much the same view is taken by Jules Rochard, who after

While it is discouraging that Blanchette's merit was not rewarded, merit is only one factor—and not always the most important—in the complex mechanism of society. Gustave Lanson, speaking of young people's misconception of this fact, says:

They have been told that talent leads to everything, and they possess talent. They have been told that social superiority follows intellectual superiority, and they are intellectually superior. But when they encounter the harsh realities of the world, they find all positions taken. *Les parentés, les protections, l'argent, l'intrigue ont poussé et poussent devant eux des médiocrités dans tous les emplois. Nos esprits supérieurs crèvent de faim. L'homme supérieur redevient un animal de proie!*<sup>1</sup>

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remarking that all French girls, it seems, are brought up for the teachers' profession, declares that it is imperative to free the daughters of rich families from the diploma mania, and to make poor girls realize the folly of sacrificing everything for a parchment of so little value. *Deux Mondes*, Feb. 1, 1888. Cf. E. Rod, *Au Milieu du Chemin* (1900), p. 26.

Similar is the situation in higher education, if we should believe Maurice Barrès, who says: "At the present time [*i. e.*, in 1897], there are 730 *licenciés de lettres* or *de sciences* seeking appointment as teachers. They regard their diploma as a promissory note of the State. And how many positions available? Six each year. This situation discourages neither the young men nor the University. There are 350 *licence* and *agrégation* Fellows. That is, the State contracts 350 new obligations, although it has at its disposal only six positions which are already sought by 730 applicants." (*Les Déracinés*, ch. v.) Gaston Deschamps makes the same complaint. *Le Malaise de la Démocratie* (1899), p. 272.

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. de la Litt. fr.*, 10th ed., p. 994.

In essentially the same proportion that Brieux fixes the responsibility, as between society and the individual, for the moral ruin of young people who have been unclassed in endeavouring to rise socially by means of education, we find the blame apportioned by Édouard Estaunié in *Le Ferment* (1899). In theme this novel bears a striking resemblance to *Blanchette*, but Estaunié, no more than Brieux, would decry education.<sup>1</sup> The "ferment" in question is the restless, effervescent intelligence of the children of labourers and peasants, who have received too much education to be content in their own social class.

Julien Dartot, the son of a peasant, having completed the three years' scientific course at the *École Centrale*, receives the usual diploma, from which he expects wonderful results, for he has studied conscientiously and is one of the best graduates turned out by the institution. But to his surprise he is everywhere refused employment because his theoretical knowledge is worthless without practical experience.<sup>2</sup> Employers tell him that "a diploma crowns every education."

<sup>1</sup> Robert Perceval, in his famous speech before the French Parliament, includes with the abuses and delusions from which France is suffering "faulty education, which unclasses its citizens." Louis Lefèvre, *Robert Perceval*, p. 295.

<sup>2</sup> "The young men have taken courses, masticated and re-masticated text-books, summarized summaries, committed formulas to memory. Their education has been all in one direction; they have had no apprenticeship." Taine, *Origines, Rég. Mod.*, ii, 272.



While young Dartot is trying to make his way in Paris as a tutor, his father, who has invested money in the boy's education as one invests capital in a promising enterprise, visits him and, like Blanchette's father, demands a reimbursing installment.<sup>1</sup> This forces Julien to accept work at a low salary in a Belgian sugar refinery where differences with his employer and quarrels with other employés soon render his situation intolerable. Success, however, is near. The unexpected death of his father puts him in possession of some funds. He returns to Paris, where he ruins a merchant marine company and transforms the business into a new establishment of which he is the head. The peasant's son has now "arrived," but at what moral sacrifice! He curses the memory of his father for his vanity in making a bourgeois of him instead of keeping him on the farm.<sup>2</sup>

*Le Ferment* lays bare the same social evils as *Blanchette*, though there is a threatening social-

<sup>1</sup> This stock feature of peasant greed is depicted with revolting brutality in *Le Rouge et le Noir* (ch. lxxiv), where the father demands payment from his son, who is in prison pending his execution.

<sup>2</sup> In his melodrama, *Roulebosse le Saltimbanque* (1899), Charles Esquier satirizes the folly of giving children a useless education. A showman's son, who has received a higher education, becomes a gambler and, in the hope of marrying a wealthy widow, calls himself a baron, disowning his honest father. When the infuriated father exposes his titled son, the young spendthrift reproaches him for giving him a useless education, which has placed a gulf between them.



istic aspect in Estaunié's novel which has no counterpart in Brieux's drama.<sup>1</sup> Estaunié's *déclassés*—even the few who survive the struggle and win a place in the sun—are so embittered over their moral degradation and their surrender of conscience that they have only contempt for the rights of others. Determined to stay on top at all costs, they consider life “a game of chance in which everyone risks his existence.”<sup>2</sup> Moreover, “the same hatred united all of these persons

<sup>1</sup> The prototype of Estaunié's hero—even to his Christian name—was furnished by Stendhal in *Le Rouge et le Noir* (1831). Julien Sorel, the son of a peasant, is destined for the priesthood; but a liaison with his patron's wife having necessitated his flight, he becomes secretary to a nobleman in Paris, whose daughter falls in love with him, notwithstanding her rank. After their illicit relations have resulted in irreparable harm, Julien returns to the scene of his provincial liaison and tries to kill his former patron's wife, whom he accuses of slander. For this attempted homicide he is sentenced to death, in spite of the intercession of his former mistresses, because of his bold speech to the reactionary jury under Charles X. Here the young *déclassé* says: “I have not the honour of belonging to your social class. I am a peasant in revolt against the injustices of my lot. But even if I were less guilty, my judges would punish in me and discourage forever this class of young men who, born in an inferior rank and oppressed by poverty, have the good fortune to obtain an education, and the audacity to mingle with what rich people call ‘society.’” This quotation shows a certain resemblance between the theme of *Le Rouge et le Noir* and that of *Blanchette* and *Le Ferment*, though I do not mean to imply that Stendhal had in view the same end as his younger compatriots. His object was to combat the prejudices that prevented a peasant from rising socially, rather than to sound a note of warning against his attempt to rise.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Ferment*, p. 329.

against the State, which had produced them. Whether victors or vanquished, all regarded themselves as dupes and demanded vengeance."<sup>1</sup>

Paul Bourget, in his novel *L'Étape* (*The Step*, 1901), carries on the theme of *Blanchette* and *Le Ferment*, with emphasis on the necessity of religious education and gradual, traditional development. Whoever attempts to jump an intermediate cultural stage in his development, invariably pays the penalty by becoming a *déraciné* as well as a *déclassé*.<sup>2</sup> The story is of two *lycée* professors, Monneron and Ferrand.

Monneron, the son of a peasant, having received a university education, rises by dint of perseverance and merit, and brings up a family of four children, three sons and a daughter. For thirty years he discharges his duties faithfully in one of the *lycées* of Paris.

Monneron's life, as seen from this sketch, would seem ideal, but unfortunately disintegrating forces have been at work in his family. Since he cordially detests religion, particularly the Catholic

<sup>1</sup> *Le Ferment*, p. 336.

<sup>2</sup> Fifteen years earlier, in *Un Crime d'Amour* (ch. iii), Bourget showed that, in spite of two generations of culture, an authentic bourgeois may be betrayed by his peasant ancestry. And recently in speaking of François Coppée, he wrote: "Nobody more than this celebrated son of a poor employé, who had mounted so rapidly to the ranks of the bourgeoisie, was persuaded of the dangers that a too rapid social rise carries with it." Then Bourget describes Coppée's denunciation of *la demi-instruction* and the attempt to make "quarter-bourgeois" of the peasantry and the working class. *Pages de Crit.*, i, 279.

faith, he has given his children no religious instruction. Then, too, his wife is extravagant and vulgar. Owing to these causes, three of his children go to the bad, though they have received a good education. The second son, Jean, now twenty-four years of age, is the "pick of the lot." Sober and chaste, he takes after his father, even to his liking for classical studies and philosophy.

Jean is in love with the daughter of the other *lycée* professor, Ferrand, a man of solid religious culture, who demands that he consent to a marriage by the Church. Owing to his father's opposition, the young suitor cannot accept this condition.<sup>1</sup> In the end, however, Monneron, grieved by domestic misfortune, and realizing the failure of his life, consents to a religious marriage.

The chief cause of his father's failure, as pointed out to Jean by Ferrand, is that Monneron, the son of a peasant, has undertaken to found a bourgeois family in a single generation, in defiance of the laws of natural development. In the final *débâcle* of his family, the grief-stricken Monneron cannot understand why those of his children who have gone wrong should have disgraced his grey hairs; they ought to have done him credit for making bourgeois of them instead

<sup>1</sup> In Sardou's *Daniel Rochat* the dramatic conflict arises out of the hero's refusal to consent to a religious marriage. A similar situation is portrayed by Anatole France in *L'Ile des Pingouins*, Book VII, ch. iv.

of peasants. 'As an explanation, Jean merely repeats to his father our author's refrain: "We were not sufficiently prepared for what we have become."<sup>1</sup>

This mania for social climbing, in its relation to education, forms the theme of two other recent novels which, though by authors less known than those whom we have considered, are works of merit. The one, *Maître Lardent* (*The Notary*, 1899), is from the pen of C. Leroux-Cesbron; the other, *L'Inquiet* (*The Unhappy Student*, 1900), is by S. Cornut.

*L'Inquiet* tells the story of Jacques Malpart, who has been sent to college by his father, a peasant, "that he may learn Latin and earn a good salary."<sup>2</sup> In Paris Jacques studies faithfully, but he always fails in the final examinations, because he lacks a basis of culture. To make his lot still more unpleasant, his brothers at home both envy and despise him, though quite unjustly, for as a boy Jacques had simple tastes and desired only to stay on the farm. It is to his vain father that he owes his misfortunes.

M. Cornut paints in sombre colours the misery of the victims of education. He asserts that

<sup>1</sup> D. Parodi, an anti-traditionalist, observes sarcastically: "One must be a rich descendant of several generations of bourgeois who have bridged the social gap, before one has a right to education." *Traditionalisme et Démocratie*, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> "A French father cannot decide to make a farmer of his son unless he deems him incapable of undertaking any other career." E. Demolins, *La Supériorité des Anglo-Saxons*.



such *déclassés* are the most pitiable of all, since at best they can become only "tutors, without hope of ever getting out of the prison in which they are at the same time convicts and convict guards," while the less fortunate beg or starve.<sup>1</sup> Young Malpart sometimes meets in the filthiest dens former "*camarades de la licence tout chevronnés de diplômés*."<sup>2</sup> Like Julien Dartot in *Le Ferment*, he conceives an implacable hatred for the existing social order.

Much the same are the bitter experiences of M. Leroux-Cesbron's *déclassé*. Lardent, a peasant, decides that his son, François, shall be a notary. At the *lycée* everybody makes fun of the boy because of his rural jargon and peasant manners; but he "digs" tenaciously, completes the course, and buys a notary's practice. His father does not fail to let him hear how much his education has cost him, but death prevents him from demanding reimbursement.

"Maître Lardent"—that is, our young notary—now lives near the Dumêliers, a family of pro-

<sup>1</sup> *L'Inquiet*, p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224. The object of Jules Vallès in writing *L'Enfant* (1879), *Le Bachelier* (1881), *L'Insurgé* (1886) was to show that the inevitable result of the present system of French education was to make poverty only the harder to bear. Jacques Vingtras, the hero of these three novels, satirizes, taunts, and ridicules his father, a pedagogue, who has left the plough and is determined to make a teacher of him against his will. (Cf. ed. 1914: *L'Enfant*, pp. 6, 61, 169, 377; *L'Insurgé*, p. 1.) In *Les Réfractaires* (p. 217), an earlier work, Vallès makes his starving "giant graduate" say: "I have gone through college, I have my degree and speak five languages."



vincial aristocracy, whose son, André, he has known at the *lycée*. André induces François to lend him a large sum money to establish a creamery, half promising him the hand of his sister, Georgette. But François is too unpolished. "Poor Lardent," the girl says, "will always have peasant manners." The failure of the creamery and Lardent's quarrel with the Dumêliers, who treat him like a lackey, make his disillusion complete and convince him that he has been unclassed through education.

In all the works which we have analysed that treat of the unclassing of peasant children, the term "peasant" is to be taken in reference to the labouring classes in general. There are, however, two good reasons why an author may prefer to take his characters from the peasants proper, that is, from the tillers of the soil. Not only is there no better example of social misfit than a peasant in a new environment, but such a situation suggests serious economic consequences. In the novel, *La Terre Qui Meurt* (*The Ruin of Rural France*, 1898), for instance, René Bazin is concerned with the ruin that results to the country from emigration to the city, rather than with the fate of the *déclassés*, or as they might be called in this case, the *déracinés*.<sup>1</sup> He does

<sup>1</sup> There is a novel with this title, *Les Déracinés* (1897), by Maurice Barrès, an implacable adversary of centralization. He deals both, like Brieux, with what he calls the State's misconception of education, and like Bazin, with the laws of political economy.

not lay the blame for unclassing upon parents, but he shows children at fault for abandoning the farm. So he does (though with less emphasis on the economic aspect) in his earlier *Les Noëllet* (*The Noëllet Family*, 1891), the story of a promising peasant youth who studies for the priesthood but fails miserably. The boy was not urged by his father to go to college, but chose his vocation of his own free will. Or, again, as in Jules de Glouvet's *L'Étude Chandoux* (*Chandoux's Notary Practice*, 1885), in which a fond peasant mother sells her farm and moves to the city in the vain hope of making a notary of her son, while the author censures the folly of the peasants, he does not, like Briex in *Blanchette*, stress the abuses of education and the responsibility of the State.<sup>1</sup> The special point may vary, then, in works dealing with the *déclassés*, though naturally in all of them some important character is a victim of social folly.

No further testimony is necessary to show that in *Blanchette* Briex treats a theme of vital interest. Nor need an author who chooses this theme fear that it will soon cease to be vital. Rather is it surprising that other dramatists should have paid so little attention to the theme.

In this subject of *Blanchette*, Briex can have

<sup>1</sup> In *La Famille Bourgeois* (1883), Glouvet depicts the spoliation of a well-to-do country spinster, who gives her nephew and niece a fashionable education, only to discover that she has caused the moral ruin of the two young *déclassés*.

been but little indebted to his two acknowledged masters of the drama, Dumas and Augier. Dumas did not concern himself with education,<sup>1</sup> though Augier did somewhat. Passages in two of his dramas,<sup>2</sup> at least, make clear that he understood the defects of modern education. Although desiring that the lower classes might rise to the bourgeoisie, he realized that "a family of house-porters requires more than one generation to make a breach in society; that the vanguard fall in the moat and must with their bodies make a bridge for their followers."<sup>3</sup>

Brieux, a more "advanced" thinker than Augier—indeed when he was writing *Blanchette* almost a socialist—probably owes what undeserved reputation he has acquired as an adversary of public education to the influence of Herbert Spencer and Tolstoy. He says himself<sup>4</sup> that Spencer modelled his mind when he was young and gave it the direction that it has ever since followed. Now in education, Spencer represents essentially the ideas of Rousseau. "If we inquire," he says, "what the real motive is for giving boys

<sup>1</sup> M. Spronck, *Deux Mondes*, Mar. 15, 1898. I do not know Lanson's authority for the assertion that "Dumas attacks the education that prepares neither man nor woman for domestic life," unless it is *L'Affaire Clémenceau*.

<sup>2</sup> Page 75, note 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Le Fils de Giboyer*, i, 7. The theories of class-fusion, as represented by such writers as George Sand, Henri de Bornier, Georges Ohnet, are beyond the scope of this book.

<sup>4</sup> "Interview," *Daily Mail* (Paris ed.), Aug. 24, 1909.

a classical education, we find it to be simply conformity to public opinion. Men dress their children's minds as they dress their bodies, in the prevailing fashion."<sup>1</sup> Spencer pleads for feeling *versus* intellect, and maintains that "the overvaluation of the intelligence necessarily has for its concomitant undervaluation of the emotional nature." "Everywhere," he exclaims, "the cry is: Educate, educate, educate! Everywhere the belief is that by such culture as schools furnish, children, and therefore adults, can be moulded into the desired shapes."<sup>2</sup> And he goes on to say that, were it fully understood that the emotions are the masters and the intellect the servant, it would be seen that little can be done by improving the servant while the masters remain unimproved.<sup>3</sup> Finally he relates how he was converted to the views of a magistrate in Gloucestershire. "It had shown him," Spencer says, in explaining the magistrate's experience, "that education, artificially pressed forward, raising in the labouring and artisan classes ambitions to enter upon higher careers, led through frequent

<sup>1</sup> *Education*, ch. i.

<sup>2</sup> *Facts and Comments*, pp. 40-41. It is especially Jean Richepin, of the French dramatists of today, who advocates less intellectual culture. Although himself a strong classical student, he pleads, like Rousseau, for the simple education of primitive man. Cf. *Vers la Joie*, iii, 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43. This, again, is Rousseau's idea. Herbert Spencer disdained university degrees and refused to seek public office.



disappointments, to bad courses and sometimes to crime."<sup>1</sup>

This last is exactly the point at issue in *Blanchette*, and Brieux agrees with Spencer only in this point. He does not condemn classical education; he merely warns against education out of harmony with a person's station in life. A classical education may be as legitimate and necessary for one person as more practical knowledge for another. He nowhere expresses approval of Spencer's implacable hostility to State education.<sup>2</sup>

Nor does Brieux share Tolstoy's Schopenhauer-Nietzsche conception of the education of women. Tolstoy, who might also be called a disciple of Rousseau, is not only, like Spencer, opposed to State education, but also to the education<sup>3</sup> of women in general, at least in its present form, the sole purpose of which is to attract men.<sup>4</sup> If

<sup>1</sup> *Facts and Comments*, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> Pierre de Coubertin, an eminent authority on public instruction, favours the maintenance of three distinct grades of education, since the State needs three classes of servants. Hence one class of citizens, he thinks, should content themselves with a common-school education. Thus M. de Coubertin rejects the *éducation intégrale* demanded by socialists like Georges Renard and André Lefèvre—that is, one and the same education for all citizens. (*L'Éducation Publique*, pp. 37, 311.) Of the same opinion is A. Fouillée. *La France au point de vue moral*, p. 206.

<sup>3</sup> *What Is to Be Done?* Ch. xxvii.

<sup>4</sup> *The Kreutzer Sonata*. In *Mademoiselle Jauffre* (1889), Marcel Prévost's spokesman declares that the object of woman's education should be to prepare her for marriage and motherhood. In later works, however, Marcel Prévost has become



Brieux owes any of his social ideas to Tolstoy, it is not his conception of education, but certain of his notions of charity,<sup>1</sup> justice,<sup>2</sup> and marriage.<sup>3</sup>

To some extent, too, at the date of *Blanchette* (1892), Brieux was under the influence of radicals like Anatole France and Zola. At the same time he shows essentially the same economic results of faulty education as conservatives like Bourget and Barrès, though he agrees only in part with them regarding the causes of these deplorable results and their remedy. He is a sociologist with broad ideas in revolt against the inconsistencies of a society which gives an education that distorts the intellectual development of its citizens and does not prepare them for the duties of life.<sup>4</sup> *Blanchette*, be it repeated, is not an indictment of education in itself, but of the illogical and irresponsible encouragement of faulty education by the State. Brieux's other plays make clear that he believes that society should utilize every individual according to his aptitude, and that this aptitude should be developed to its maximum through education. All citizens are so many social values, to waste any portion of which is folly.<sup>5</sup> Society should permit all its members

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an advanced feminist. Cf. *Les Vierges Fortes* (1900), *Lettres à Françoise* (1902), *La plus Faible* (1904).

<sup>1</sup> Chapter VII.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter XIII.

<sup>3</sup> Chapter IX.

<sup>4</sup> "Our schools form graduates, functionaries, officials, bureaucrats; they do not form men capable of taking care of themselves." E. Demolins, *La Supériorité des Anglo-Saxons*.

<sup>5</sup> In this he agrees with Ferdinand Buisson.

to rise to the plane of enlightened humanity.<sup>1</sup> The *élite* should be recruited more and more from the broad strata of democracy, rejuvenated more and more with the vigour and energy of the masses. And this is to be accomplished by the right kind of education, by education that is sensible and reasonable. Such education Brieux believes to be after their daily bread the greatest need of the common people.

<sup>1</sup> Here Brieux agrees with Gabriel Séailles.

## CHAPTER V

### THE RELATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

*La Couvée* (Brieux)—*La Sacrifiée* (Devore)—*L'Envolée* (Devore)—*La Conscience de l'Enfant* (Devore)—*La Course du Flambeau* (Hervieu)—*Nous, les Mères* (Margueritte)—*L'Enfant de l'Amour* (Bataille)—*Papa* (Flers and Caillavet)—*La Peur de Vivre* (Bordeaux).

THE unreasonableness of Blanchette's father towards the State might suggest his equal unreasonableness towards his child. But it does not follow that by such a line of thought Brieux came to the subject of *La Couvée*, his next important work—domestic education in France. Between the subjects of Brieux's plays it is impossible to trace continuity. Apparently when he had expressed his ideas on one social problem, it was largely chance what subject he should treat next. But it was pretty sure to be another of importance, and we shall see that in *La Couvée*, dealing with the relation of parents and children, he had good reason to believe that he had found such a subject. For if parental authority in France was formerly, as all signs seem to point, too severe, latterly it has become so weakened as some-

times to threaten grave ills to over-indulged children.

The severity of paternal authority in France was native to the soil, and not of Roman origin. Cæsar tells us that the Gauls of his time did not permit their sons to approach them until they had grown to manhood. French literature of the Middle Ages reflects the same spirit: above the royal majesty towered another majesty more inviolable and more sacred, that of the paternal power.<sup>1</sup> This authority no son dared dispute with impunity, even though he had become a mightier lord than his father. Down to the middle of the eighteenth century, and even as late as the Revolution, particularly among the aristocracy, French children were kept in strict subordination.<sup>2</sup> Parents hardly held, or at least did not exercise, the power of life and death over their offspring; but for disobedience a grown son might be imprisoned and a daughter thrust into a convent.<sup>3</sup>

The severe discipline of the seventeenth century would be dismissed as a myth if it were not historically authenticated. According to Sarcey, such a situation as the scene in which a son has his father given a drubbing by his valet, Scapin,

<sup>1</sup> Saint-Marc Girardin, *Cours de Litt.*, i, 305.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert Spencer, *Prin. of Ethics*, vol. ii, pt. iv, ch. xxi.

<sup>3</sup> Rabelais and Montaigne opposed disciplinary severity. The latter says: "I utterly condemn all manner of violence in the education of a young spirit brought up to honour and liberty." *Essais*, Bk. II, ch. viii.

was tolerated and enjoyed only because, in reality, paternal authority was not questioned.<sup>1</sup> Nor was it in most families in the eighteenth century. Chateaubriand writes: "My mother, my sister, and I, transformed into statues by my father's presence, used to recover ourselves only after he had left the room."<sup>2</sup> Taine assures us that a son regularly addressed his father as "*monsieur*," at least among the aristocracy, and that a daughter would come "respectfully" to kiss her mother's hand at her toilet. Quoting such authorities as Beaumarchais, Mirabeau (the orator), and Restif de la Bretonne, he says that children, when with their parents, were timid and silent.<sup>3</sup> According to Legouv  , it was customary for a son to remove his hat in the presence of his father.<sup>4</sup>

The seventeenth century, which was interested primarily in the activities of the intellect and the reason, paid little attention to children, creatures

<sup>1</sup> *Quarante Ans de Th   tre*, vi, 253.

<sup>2</sup> *M  moires*, July, 1819. Yet Ren   makes the surprising confession that the memory of his father's rigour was "almost agreeable" to him. *Ibid.*, June, 1812.

<sup>3</sup> *Ancien R  gime*, Bk. II, ch. ii. After Beaumarchais's father had "exiled" him by a ruse, he made the conditions on which the future author of *Figaro* might return: "I must have a full and entire submission to my wishes, and marked respect in words, actions, and behaviour." Addressing his father as "Monsieur and honoured Father," young Caron, who was about eighteen, accepted humbly. Louis de Lom  nie, *Beaumarchais et son Temps*, i, 96.

<sup>4</sup> *Les Fils d'Aujourd'hui* (1869), p. 35.



guided by natural impulses.<sup>1</sup> But dramatic literature could not disregard entirely such subjects as paternal authority, filial obedience, and maternal affection. Corneille, Rotrou, Molière, Racine, all made some use of them, though to be sure in doing so, they generally represent their "children" as beyond the years of childhood.

Corneille's types like Don Diègue and the elder Horace represent a stern but noble conception of paternal love. Their sober affection is strongly tempered with sentiments of grandeur, honour, and hereditary dignity. According to Corneille, paternal affection should not be a passion, but rather a duty. It is duty that prompts Horace to threaten his son with death for cowardice.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Rotrou's Venceslas condemns one of his sons to death for slaying the other, whereas Siroès refuses to condemn his guilty father.<sup>3</sup> These two examples from Rotrou illustrate admirably the seventeenth-century conception of paternal and filial relations. For an example of ideal maternal devotion, we need only recall *Andromaque*.

<sup>1</sup> La Fontaine speaks of "un fripon d'enfant (cet âge est sans pitié").

<sup>2</sup> Corneille's attitude here cannot be due entirely to his Roman subject, for in *Le Menteur* he takes essentially the same standpoint.

<sup>3</sup> The son's sentiments are embodied in the lines:

"Laisser ravir un trône est une lâcheté,  
Mais en chasser un père est une impiété."

Or again:

*Cosroès*, i, 3.

"Mais je sens, quoique roi, que je suis encore fils."

*Ibid.*, iii, 3.

Among the few dramatic works of the eighteenth century that continue the tradition of the classical period regarding family relations, may be mentioned *L'Orphelin de la Chine*, *Mérope*, and *Le Glorieux*. In the first of these, Voltaire argues that a mother places the welfare of her child above every other consideration, whereas a father will sacrifice his child, if necessary, to save his country. In *Mérope*, he shows the purifying influence of maternal love.<sup>1</sup> The vain young count satirized by Destouches in *Le Glorieux* attempts to pass his honest father off as his intendant, but repents when humiliated.

It was in the tearful comedy and the bourgeois tragedy of the eighteenth century that domestic family relations found their full expression. And it was at this same time that the majesty of parental authority, at least in the drama, grew notably less awful. Between the date of *Inès de Castro* (1723), and the representation of Florian's sentimental comedies (1790), children of all ages were admitted to full citizenship in the drama.<sup>2</sup> If French fathers were as sentimental and declamatory as the drama of this period would indicate, they deserved the decline of their authority. As early as 1728 Piron sounded a note of warning in *Les Fils Ingrats*; and in 1781 Mercier wrote: "Nothing astonishes a foreigner more than the impertinent manner in which a son speaks to his

<sup>1</sup> Victor Hugo treats this theme in *Lucrèce Borgia*.

<sup>2</sup> See F. Gaiffe, *Le Drame en France au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*.

father here. He jokes and rallies him, makes disrespectful remarks about his age, and the father has the regrettable weakness to think it funny."<sup>1</sup>

As was natural with the ironical people that produced the *Fabliaux* and the *Roman de Renart*, the French had always delighted in satirizing old men, particularly in matters of love. But in the second half of the eighteenth century, the old spirit of mere joking ceased, and a more serious feeling arose, which in time worked irreparable injury to the prestige of parents. True, if a student of French literature were asked to name the man of letters most directly responsible for the decline of filial obedience, he would naturally think at once of Molière, whom Émile Faguet has called the scourge of old age and ridicule.<sup>2</sup> Certainly no other French writer ever mocked paternal authority so pitilessly. But Molière's object had been comic effect rather than social reform. The fathers and husbands whom he chose as targets were ridiculous not as husbands and fathers, but on account of the vices that dishonoured them. Rousseau, failing to understand this, charged the great comic poet with overturning the sacred foundation of society by deriding the

<sup>1</sup> *Tableau de Paris*, ch. lviii. In Restif de la Bretonne we read: "Extreme severity may be a good thing, or it may be an evil; but the excessive indulgence which parents have had for their children for some years, is always bad." *La Mère Sévère*.

<sup>2</sup> *Culte de l'Incompétence*, p. 147.

venerable rights of fathers over their children.<sup>1</sup> This accusation was entirely worthy of the paradox philosopher; for in reality he himself, and not Molière, must be regarded as the chief force in the *débâcle* of parental authority. If we take the Great Revolution as the turning point, we find that, in the relation of children to parents, Rousseau's influence was paramount, not only immediately before and during the Revolution of 1789, but also in the two following upheavals, especially the Revolution of 1848. It would be impossible to proclaim the emancipation of the child in more emphatic terms than those used in the first two chapters of *The Social Contract*—that in "natural society" (where men are born free) children are their own masters and exempt from all filial obligations as soon as their need of sustenance ceases.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the pedagogical theories developed in *Émile* are all to the advantage of the child. Rousseau's appeal to mothers to suckle their babies, instead of entrusting them to wet-nurses, also awakened keen interest in children and their rights. Thus it happened that the

<sup>1</sup> *Lettre sur les Spectacles*. Molière expresses his ideal of paternal kindness in *Mélicerte* (ii, 5):

"Ah! que pour ses enfants un père a de faiblesse!  
Peut-on rien refuser à leurs mots de tendresse?  
Et ne se sent-on pas certains mouvements doux,  
Quand on vient à songer que cela sort de vous?"

<sup>2</sup> It must be said, in justice to Jean-Jacques, that he would have his rule work both ways, thus early releasing parents from obligations to their children—a principle which he put into practice most scrupulously.



head of Louis XVI had scarcely fallen, when the National Convention, in its "relentless war upon the family and paternal authority," decreed the equality of inheritances.<sup>1</sup> This legislation, in "proclaiming at last the rights of sons," and favouring "natural liberty," was extreme.<sup>2</sup> In a modified form, it has since tended both to encourage a spirit of independence and extravagance in children and to limit the family to one child.<sup>3</sup>

The movement due to Rousseau and the Revolution continued to develop in the form of individualism and admiration of so-called Anglo-Saxon liberty. So far as romanticism had any special influence, it tended likewise to weaken family bonds and to destroy the respect of children for their parents. A very important force working towards the same end was the decline of religious faith. For centuries the Catholic education that children received had inculcated in them a sense of submissive filial respect. The removal of this restraining influence, in many cases, virtually amounted to their emancipation. Then, too, the

<sup>1</sup> P. Bourget, *Pages de Crit.*, i, 7. A persistent adversary of this law was Le Play, the staunch advocate of paternal authority. (Cf. *L'Organisation du Travail*, pp. 25, 191.) Edmond About says of the measure: "L'agriculture en souffre, l'industrie en souffre, le commerce en souffre, le sens commun en rougit." *Le Progrès*, p. 295.

<sup>2</sup> A. Rambaud, *Hist. de la Civ. Contemp. en France*, p. 85. "L'on peut dire que notre Révolution n'a pas été moins favorable au bonheur des enfants qu'au bonheur matériel des peuples." E. Grimard, *L'Enfant, son Passé, son Avenir*, p. 322.

<sup>3</sup> F. Le Play, *Organisation de la Famille*, 5th ed., p. 81.



lowering of moral standards that resulted from the vogue of dilettantism,<sup>1</sup> pessimism, and naturalism, encouraged the insubordinate attitude of children. For evidently a father who countenances immorality, or whose own conduct is not above reproach, must, or should, loosen the reins of authority.<sup>2</sup> And a mother's authority, in such a case, suffers even more than a father's.<sup>3</sup>

All of these influences have been inherited by present-day democracy, which, Émile Faguet asserts, teaches children contempt for their parents. For democracy endeavours to separate the child from its family, to give it a democratic education instead of one chosen by the parents, and to teach it not to follow its parents' precepts.<sup>4</sup> Legouv  , however, the staunch champion of

<sup>1</sup> After Renan had disavowed his earlier seriousness, his advice to a young man was: "Amusez-vous, puisque vous avez vingt ans." (*Questions Contemp.*, p. 301.) He himself regretted not having had a good time while young instead of working hard. *Disc. et Conf  r.*, p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> M. Nozi  re, Pref. to Stoullig's *Annales* (1907). Examples of this principle: *Le Fils Naturel*, *Un P  re Prodigue* (Dumas), *Les Effront  s* (Augier), *Le Marquis de Priola* (Lavedan), *M. de R  boval*, *La Petite Amie*, *Simone* (Brieux), *Bertrade* (Lema  tre), *Les Affaires* (Mirbeau), *Notre Jeunesse* (Capus), *La Loi de Pardon* (Landay).

<sup>3</sup> *L'Autre Danger* (Donnay), *La Sacrifi  e* (Devore), *La Fugitive* (Picard), *R  volt  e* (Lema  tre), *Les Maris de leurs Filles* (Wolff), *Pierre et Th  r  se*, *Les Anges Gardiens* (Pr  vost).

<sup>4</sup> *Culte de l'Incomp  tence*, pp. 140-142. This conflict, which grew out of the struggle between Church and State in France, gave rise to the well-known leagues of family heads (*p  res de famille*); but such fathers were destined ultimately to lose greatly in parental prestige.

democracy, maintained that domestic education must undergo the same evolution that political government passed through as a result of the Revolution, and must seek its solution in democracy. As early as 1869 he declared that fathers and sons scarcely agreed any longer about anything. The cause of this estrangement he would attribute to the inequality of education between parents and children. The unenviable lot of the former, whom he characterizes as "humble in the presence of their children," may be inferred from his suggestion that a course in filial duty be taught in the schools.<sup>1</sup>

Sporadic examples of stern discipline are still met with in contemporary French literature, but only in sufficient number to emphasize their contrast with the predominating opposite tendency.<sup>2</sup> Jean Jullien's Perraud says of his father: "There was no arguing with him. He didn't

<sup>1</sup> *Les Fils d'Aujourd'hui*, pp. 6-29.

<sup>2</sup> The lives of four famous literary men will afford instances. After the death of his mother, Stendhal became estranged from his father, as we may infer from his unfinished novel, *La Vie d'Henri Brulard*. Benjamin Constant had a similar experience. (P. Bourget, *Essais de Psych. Contemp.*, i, 334.) Another instance is the mysterious case of Mérimée. The Goncourts tell us that, Mérimée's parents having rallied him once for making a wry face when scolded, he vowed that they should never jeer at him again; that indeed he kept his resolution "en se séchant à fond." Hence his mortal dread of ridicule. (*Journal*, Jan. 3, 1864.) According to Augustin Filon, however, Mérimée, as an only child, was overindulged, rather than sternly brought up, by his parents. (*Mérimée*, p. 7.) These three "insurgents" are quite overshadowed by Jules Vallès, the author of *Les Réfractaires*, whose life and works constitute a revolt against paren-

tell me a second time to take up law.”<sup>1</sup> Coppée’s Chrétien Lescuyer never appeared before his “glacial” father without a feeling of fear.<sup>2</sup> And in Bazin’s Noëllet family “the children did not discuss their father’s orders.”<sup>3</sup> Such a drama as Jean Gravier’s *Le Droit de Mort* (1913), in which a father, by refusing to permit an urgent surgical operation, is the cause of the son’s death, should, however, not be taken too seriously. For it is in vain that the Civil Code says: “A son remains under paternal authority up to his twenty-first year,”<sup>4</sup> and that “a child, at all times, must honour and respect its father and mother”<sup>5</sup>: these articles have practically become a dead letter. Yet an eminent philosopher and political economist, writing in 1900, asserts that the number of children maltreated by their parents in France is “exceedingly numerous.”<sup>6</sup> This would

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tal tyranny and the social order. In Part One of his *Jacques Vingtras* (1879), an autobiographical novel, the hero says (p. 1): “My mother whips me every morning. When she hasn’t time in the morning, she waits till noon, rarely later than four o’clock.” And elsewhere (p. 388): “Very well! I will stay my time out here, and then go to Paris. Once in Paris, we shall see whether fathers have the power of life and death over their sons.”

<sup>1</sup> *La Poigne*, Act I. This same Perraud disinherits his own son for disobedience, but repents in the final scene, so repudiating his theory of *la poigne*.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Coupable*, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Les Noëllet*, ch. iv.

<sup>4</sup> Article 304.

<sup>5</sup> Article 371.

<sup>6</sup> A: Fouillée, *La France au Point de Vue Moral*, p. 196. This assertion is contradicted by Bodley. (*France*, i, 203.) Cf. P. Strauss (“Les Enfants Martyrs,” *Rev. Bleue*, Jan. 23, 1897), who discusses the law of July 24, 1889, intended to protect children maltreated by their parents.

account for the vogue of a play like *Bagnes d'Enfants* (1910),<sup>1</sup> which denounces the tyranny of fathers who send their sons to the modern hells called reform schools.

The dark colours in which these remnants of cruelty are painted indicate their exceptional nature. The nineteenth century in France has justly been called "*le siècle de l'enfant.*" Never before were children so fondled and idolized, so flattered and spoiled. "*Le charme, la grâce, la faiblesse, la douceur de l'enfant furent chantés, modulés en prose et en vers.*"<sup>2</sup> Even Victor Hugo, the severe author of *Les Châtiments*, with thunderbolts and implacable wrath for crowned heads and mitred prelates, sings in the fondest strains the innocent caprices of childhood. Cosette and Gavroche are his most charming creations; and certainly no other grandchildren were ever immortalized in verse as Georges and Jeanne. With Musset it was a profession of faith to spoil children.<sup>3</sup> Alphonse Daudet, Sully Prudhomme, François Coppée, Anatole France, Jean Aicard, and a dozen others could subscribe to the same dogma. Finally, in consideration for the child as the supreme hope of the future, J. H. Rosny excels them all.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A dramatization of Édouard Quet's novel, by A. de Lorde and P. Chaîne.

<sup>2</sup> M. Daubresse, "L'Émancipation de l'Enfant," *Rev. Bleue*, Mar. 21, 1903.

<sup>3</sup> G. Renard, "Le Droit de l'Enfant," *Rev. Bleue*, Dec. 17, 1910.

<sup>4</sup> "L'Enfant, ce prolongement de soi-même en l'avenir, est décrit par Rosny avec une sorte de culte. Il n'est pas un livre



In this exaltation of children the drama has fully kept pace with the other literary genres, though owing to a different mode of expression, the fact may at first seem less evident. As Gabriel Trarieux has said, "*le théâtre tout entier d'Hervieu, celui de Brieux presque entier, celui de Curel en partie, ont l'enfant pour mobile.*"<sup>1</sup> In other words, the present tendency in France is to bestow more and more upon the child, as the symbol of future hope, the worship formerly consecrated to dogmatic creeds.<sup>2</sup> This is what Pierre Baudin calls shifting the seat of worship. "People who have lost their religious faith," he says, "are willing not to believe any longer in heaven, but they refuse to give up their faith in the earth."<sup>3</sup> Very similar is the philosophy of Pierre-Hyacinthe Loyson, who declares that "all conviction, all enthusiasm, all devotion is religion."<sup>4</sup>

It may be said in all truth that with Brieux the child has become the object of a cult. No less

où ne fleurisse le charme d'une enfance. L'enfant est le plus beau poème qui puisse intéresser l'adulte." G. Casella, *J.-H. Rosny*, p. 27.

<sup>1</sup> "L'Idéal du Drame Fr. Mod.," *La Rev.*, Sept. 15, 1904. The list should, however, include Gaston Devore, who ranks immediately after Brieux, and before Hervieu.

<sup>2</sup> "L'enfant, c'est l'avenir, et la sainte mission de la famille est de les préparer l'un pour l'autre et l'un par l'autre." E. Grimard, *L'Enfant, son Passé, son Avenir*.

<sup>3</sup> Pref. to *Les Prophètes*, by A. Brisson.

<sup>4</sup> *L'Apôtre*, Pref.



than eight of his plays<sup>1</sup> have for their prime consideration the interest of the child; and in at least five others,<sup>2</sup> he devotes more or less attention to some aspect of this same general theme. Whether the child is threatened at birth with poverty, paternal abandonment, and social ostracism,<sup>3</sup> or deprived of its mother's breast to satisfy the vanity of a Parisian bourgeoisie<sup>4</sup>; whether this precious incarnation, while still in the cradle, is about to be sacrificed for its parents' happiness,<sup>5</sup> or grows up a victim of parental leniency<sup>6</sup>—in each case Brieux enlists his talent and power of persuasion, to safeguard the vital interests of the race. For fear of compromising the child's future, he refuses the husband not only the right to take vengeance upon a faithless wife,<sup>7</sup> but even the right to replace a "deserter."<sup>8</sup> Not content with championing a boy's right to his individuality, to a vocation and a wife of his own choice,<sup>9</sup> he subordinates all family interests to the welfare of a little girl.<sup>10</sup> And in his other plays, Brieux seldom loses sight of the child. He is concerned about the future generation, not the present

<sup>1</sup> *La Couvée, Le Berceau, Les Remplaçantes, La Petite Amie, Maternité, La Déserteuse, Simone, Suzette.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ménages d'Artistes, M. de Réboval, Blanchette, Résultat des Courses, Les Avariés.*

<sup>3</sup> *Maternité.*

<sup>4</sup> *Les Remplaçantes.*

<sup>5</sup> *Le Berceau.*

<sup>6</sup> *La Couvée.*

<sup>7</sup> *Simone.*

<sup>8</sup> *La Déserteuse.*

<sup>9</sup> *La Petite Amie.* Cf. *La Robe Rouge*, i, 6.

<sup>10</sup> *Suzette.*

one, which alone interests certain egotists, whose motto seems to be: "*Après nous le déluge.*"<sup>1</sup>

Numerous passages in the works of other French authors show that, in general, they agree with Brieux.<sup>2</sup> While some sternly demand greater consideration for children, others show their interest in them by presenting the sweeter side of family relations. Maurice Donnay, for instance, excels in captivating children-scenes. Saint-Phoin, with Pierre and Marie on his knees, singing *Bobine* to them<sup>3</sup>; Marie-Louise and Yvonne disputing over their toys,<sup>4</sup> and the opening scene of *Amants*, where the little tots fight, are all admirably handled, and scarcely equalled by Brieux's scene in which the children are dancing

<sup>1</sup> William G. Sharp, American Ambassador to France, writing on the attitude of the French people towards the future generation, says: "You know there is the saying that in England it is all for the man, in America, all for the woman, but in France all for the child. Can any country go far wrong in which each generation lives and works and thinks, not for itself so much as for the generation that is to come after it?" *New York Times*, Sept. 10, 1916.

<sup>2</sup> Significant are the following: *Nos Fils que feront-ils? Nos Filles qu'en feront-nous?* (H. Le Roux); *Les Jeunes, ou l'Espoir de la France* (H. Lavedan); *La Maison* (H. Bordeaux); *Nos Enfants* (G. Petit); *Les Petits* (L. Népoty); *Les Petites* (M. Miollay); *La Maison* (G. Mitchell). In this connection two books deserve special mention. The one, *Livre de mes Fils* (1906), by Paul Doumer, may be called a manual of noble precepts for both young people and parents; the other, *Les Anges Gardiens* (1914), by Marcel Prévost, emphasizes the caution necessary in entrusting one's children to private teachers of foreign nationality and unknown moral character.

<sup>3</sup> *Le Torrent.*

<sup>4</sup> *La Bascule.*

the *Matchiche*,<sup>1</sup> or Bernstein's Christmas tableau.<sup>2</sup> Unique is the picture of Henry IV at the Louvre, on all fours with his children scuffling and calling one another names, as they try to climb upon his back.<sup>3</sup> Loyson's Baudouin, a cabinet minister surprised by his grandchildren while engrossed in a grave political question, is true to life.<sup>4</sup> One might go on for page after page citing such charming scenes with children in recent French literature.<sup>5</sup>

In more practical ways, too, there are sufficient signs of regard for the child in France. The Child Labour law of March 30, 1900, indicates the same sentiment in legislation.<sup>6</sup> Further proof is furnished by the recent enactment (November, 1912) of a law permitting the tracing of paternity—a concession refused even by the Revolutionary legislators, who were so favourable to the child.<sup>7</sup> And the low birth rate in France is

<sup>1</sup> *La Française*.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Bercaill*.

<sup>3</sup> *Madame Margot*, by É. Moreau and G. Clairville.

<sup>4</sup> *L'Apôtre*.

<sup>5</sup> For captivating scenes, no one drama excels *La Victime*, by F. Vandérem and M. Franc-Nohain.

<sup>6</sup> P. Leroy-Beaulieu considers this law economically injurious. *Traité d'Econ. Pol.*, iv, 615. A. Casenave, writing in 1905, says: "For more than thirty years, French legislation has made incessant efforts to protect children." *Les Tribunaux civils de Paris pendant la Révolution*, i, cxliv.

<sup>7</sup> L. Delzons, "Recherche de la Paternité," *Deux Mondes*, Feb. 1, 1913. Before the Revolution, there was no legal objection to the tracing of paternity. Cf. A. Casenave, ref. quoted, i, cxlvi.

accounted for, in part, by the desire of parents to see their children well provided for.

It is only natural that to some keen observers such solicitude for the child should seem exaggerated and intense parental affection a dangerous weakness. In the adulation of children the bourgeoisie are accused of harmful excess.<sup>1</sup> Even such a sympathizer with them as Émile Augier represents their children as indolent, extravagant, and lacking in filial respect.<sup>2</sup> Dumas *fils* seemed to view the matter with less alarm, for the reason, doubtless, that other questions interested him more. In later years, domestic education has frequently been the occasion for censure from French men of letters, as is apparent from the discussion in the press. According to Félix Thomas, the children of the labouring classes receive more rational training than those of the bourgeoisie.<sup>3</sup> J. Porcher deplores the way in which French parents spoil their children by catering to all their whims and making them

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Edmond Fleg's comedy, *Le Trouble-Fête* (1913), in which a young bourgeois household is upset by the birth of a child.

<sup>2</sup> H. Gaillard de Champrix, *Émile Augier et la Com. Soc.*, pp. 359, 362. For dramatic purposes, the children in *Madame Caverlet* are models of obedience. Also in *Le Fils de Giboyer* and *Un Beau Mariage* the young people have been brought up well; but these are not Augier's types. He expresses his personal convictions in *La Jeunesse* (iii, 10), where Philippe says to Hubert:

"Ah! mon cher, le respect filial est malade,  
Et notre siècle en est bien déshabitué!"

<sup>3</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Jan. 25, 1908.



sovereign lords of the home.<sup>1</sup> "Hence," he says, in the case of the son, "his egotism, his effeminacy, his unwillingness to sacrifice himself for another, in a word, his *lâcheté*." He summarizes a young man's programme thus: "With a minimum of privations, obtain a maximum of enjoyment; escape military service; carouse as long as one's money and health will permit; finally, make a rich marriage, and have at most one child."<sup>2</sup> Nowadays a woman, instead of entrusting the education of her daughter to the convent, as formerly, makes a doll of her while she is young and idolizes her when grown.<sup>3</sup> It is understood that a mother always shields her son if perchance his father attempts to punish him.<sup>4</sup> Hence it is not surprising that children should consider themselves at least their parents' equals<sup>5</sup>; that they should judge their parents' conduct,<sup>6</sup> and frequently insist on having the last word.<sup>7</sup> A divorced

<sup>1</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, July 3, 1897. With Restif de la Bretonne it was a maxim that "les plus cruels ennemis des enfants, ce sont les parents qui les gâtent."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Léon Grandet declares in the following number of the *Revue Bleue* that M. Porcher's views are extreme and unjust.

<sup>3</sup> E. Legouv  , *Les P  res et les Enfants au XIX   Si  cle*, p. 409.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Doumer, however, thinks that both girls and boys should be left as long as possible under their mother's control. He conceives of paternal authority as something too severe for constant exercise. Auguste Comte advocated maternal supervision of the child's education. With Aim   Martin it was a principle that "l'instruction appartient    l'homme; l'  ducation est   uvre maternelle."

<sup>5</sup> H. Bordeaux, *Le Lac Noir*.

<sup>6</sup> E. Quet, *Les Charitables*.

<sup>7</sup> "It is well known that in the modern family, instead of the



parent who marries again almost invariably incurs silent or open filial reproach. Max Andeline's bantering, rallying conduct toward his father and mother<sup>1</sup> is equalled only by the scandalous mockery with which Paul Gostard receives the timid suggestions of his devoted mother.<sup>2</sup> In Émile Fabre's *La Vie Publique*, M. de Riols, who is opposed to his son's contemplated marriage, says: "We are living at a time when sons disregard the authority of their fathers."<sup>3</sup> One might expect parental authority to have maintained itself in the rural districts, but such is not the case. As early as 1869, according to Legouvé, the situation was already even worse there than elsewhere; for not only had filial respect disappeared, but the refining influence of affection did not develop, as among the bourgeoisie, to compensate for the loss. Hence cynic ingratitude is the capital vice of peasants' sons.<sup>4</sup> Examples in French literature of dissatisfaction with the training of children at home might be multiplied indefinitely.

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father guiding the child, the latter guides the father." P. Leroy-Beaulieu, *The Mod. State*, p. 99.

<sup>1</sup> *Samson* (H. Bernstein).

<sup>2</sup> H. Lavedan, *Le Nouveau Jeu*. Cf. A. Fernet, *La Maison Divisée*.

<sup>3</sup> We find the same complaint in Paul Margueritte's recent novel, *Nous, les Mères*, and again in his *Le Prisme*.

<sup>4</sup> *Les Fils d'Aujourd'hui*. "La famille commence par l'instinct et aboutit à la plus pure des idées morales, la piété filiale." (Saint-Marc Girardin, *Cours de Litt.*, ii, 2.) Claire de Pratz tells us that people educated in the Catholic *écoles libres* have a more polite and refined manner than those educated in the State schools. *France from Within* (1912), p. 118.

Realizing how essential it is that children should be brought up rationally, Brieux presented his views on the question in *La Couvée* (*The Brood*, 1893), a comedy in which he satirizes goodnaturedly certain weaknesses of parents. The central character is Graindor, a well-to-do wine merchant in a provincial city, who has been too busy to direct the education of his children, Auguste and Fifine. Instead of keeping his son under intimidating restraint, he has made a "comrade" of him and encouraged him to sow his wild oats.<sup>1</sup> Heeding this advice, the young scapegrace is lavishing money upon an actress. It would break Mme. Graindor's heart to deny her children anything. Thus it happens that Fifine, now eighteen, still has a tendency to giggle at everything, but not the slightest conception of the responsibilities of life. She is engaged to André Meillet, a young physician. As soon as Fifine gains the social freedom implied in marriage, she intends to amuse herself like a woman of society.

During Mme. Meillet's formal call to ask for Fifine's hand, we see the contrast between André's rearing and the Graindor children's. The wine merchant says frankly that Auguste is a good-for-nothing spoiled by his mother, but Mme. Graindor defends her darling, rejoicing that they succeeded in getting him exempted from military

<sup>1</sup> In Augier's dramas it is not uncommon for a father to tell his son to contract a "harmless" liaison. Cf. *Les Corbeaux* (Becque), *La Petite Amie* (Brieux), *La Poigne* (Jullien).]

service. He wanted to marry "an attractive young woman in a good situation"; but they have in view for him the daughter of their only competitor in the wine business.<sup>1</sup> Mme. Meillet gives them to understand that her son has served in the army and completed his medical course. To him everything in life has a serious meaning. Indeed, if we had not heard of a certain god's magic darts, the author could not make us believe that André loves a frivolous doll like Fifine. Frivolous is not exactly the word; nor is Fifine ill-behaved; but she is as *inconsciente* and *veule* as a child.

Mme. Graindor, who of course gives her consent to the marriage, exclaims in a fit of emotion: "All I ask now is to die, since my children no longer need me."<sup>2</sup> Fifine, not to be outdone, offers to stay with her parents instead of marrying.<sup>3</sup> As a compromise, it is agreed that the young people shall occupy the apartment on the second floor.<sup>4</sup>

After their marriage, André and Fifine take their meals at Mme. Graindor's. The young

<sup>1</sup> Auguste wanted to be an artist, but his parents opposed his choice. They now regret this. Brieux develops the same idea in *La Petite Amie*. The bourgeoisie are frequently charged with this mistake.

<sup>2</sup> The same situation in H. Bordeaux's *La Peur de Vivre*, where Mme. Dulaurens accuses her daughter of ingratitude.

<sup>3</sup> Alice Dulaurens says to her mother: "I will not marry, I will stay with you." *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Mme. Dulaurens makes it a condition of her consent that her daughter must live with her. *Ibid.*

wife spends most of her time dressing, gadding about, and visiting with her mother. Knowing that she has her mother's approval, she pays no attention to André's gentle hints about her household duties. To complicate the situation, Mme. Graindor and André dispute about several things. In the mother-in-law's opinion, a young couple should enjoy their youth as long as possible: children will come soon enough and in sufficient number. One child, anyway, she thinks, is enough. André says that children are the joy and peace of the home. The more, the better: France needs them. Mme. Graindor objects that he could not afford to hire so many nurses. André intends that his children shall have no nurse but their mother. Mme. Graindor has almost a horror of a woman who nurses her baby.<sup>1</sup> When André's mother attempts to "put things in order," Fifine's parents interfere. But thanks to Graindor's good sense, the young people are left to reach an agreement by themselves. To avoid trouble in the future, they will move to their own house.

Meanwhile Auguste Graindor, abandoned by his actress, has confessed his debts to his father, threatening to commit suicide if not permitted to join the army in Algeria. His parents realize that they must let him go, but this painful duty is a cruel blow to both of them,

<sup>1</sup> Brieux treats this question at length in *Les Remplaçantes*. Cf. Chapter XIV of the present volume.



now that Fifine has moved away. "We two," says Graindor sadly to his wife, "shall be left alone: the brood is fledged, the little ones are leaving the nest."

Evidently one moral of the drama is that when young people marry and begin life for themselves, meddling on the part of mothers-in-law, even though it be well meant, results only in harm. If that were the sole significance of the piece, Brieux might be accused of attempting to force an open door. But as I see the play, he is concerned particularly with the training of children. This is clear from the fact that he detached Act II as an independent comedy, under the title of *The School for Mothers-in-Law*, thus showing that the comic quarrel of the mothers forms an episode by itself. The fundamental part of the dénouement is the decision to send Auguste to Algeria and to let the young couple settle their own differences. No trouble would have risen if Fifine had been as well reared as André. In emphasizing the contrast between André's training and the Graindor children's, Brieux shows what he thinks domestic education should be. We must not infer, however, that he favours severe discipline. In *La Petite Amie* (1902), he denounces the paternal tyranny that seeks unduly to mould a child's character; and in both *Les Remplaçantes* (1901) and *Suzette* (1909) he condemns parents' abuse of their authority, or at least influence, over their married children. Parental kindness should



always accompany parental firmness.<sup>1</sup> In *La Française* (1907), a play intended to represent the best French family life, not only does charming little Pierre obey his parents without a word of admonition, but his grown half-sister lives in perfect harmony with her stepmother.

Characterization is even stronger in *La Couvée* than in *Blanchette*, for here there is no important character so inconsistent as the heroine of that earlier play. The author combines his accurately observed details so skilfully as to produce a picture of family life that is very vivid. Typical as the characters are, each has individuality. And Brieux shows himself now past master in the revelation of character by didactic episodes. In this neither Augier nor Dumas *fils* was more successful. Mme. Graindor, whose maternal affection contains a strong tincture of sentimentalism, is an especially happy creation, in view of the symbolical, didactic theme of the play. The faults of her children are fully brought out, but with no intention of putting on Auguste and Fifine the blame for their parents' harmful leniency. The girl's frivolity is clearly

<sup>1</sup> In his address before the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Brieux said: "Tyrants are found not only on thrones, but also around the family hearth. Particularly in the Latin countries there are humble, venerable bourgeois who, though having kindly faces, are really detestable despots and hold their wives and children in bondage. Such men have good intentions. They sin only through a pride of which they are ignorant; they are convinced that they know better than their children what is best for them."

made due to her *veulerie*, which Louis Chevallier, who finds this failing characteristic of the *gens du monde*, defines as "indifference to everything that does not directly affect the person's egotistical happiness."<sup>1</sup> Her desire to marry is natural enough. By so doing she could gain her social freedom, for in France a married woman has infinitely more liberty than an unmarried one.<sup>2</sup> Brieux shows us perfectly what conception such an irresponsible doll-wife has of marriage, especially when her mother bears the son-in-law a grudge for taking the daughter from her. Equally well he shows us the attitude towards life of a young man like Auguste, spoiled by the unintelligent comradeship<sup>3</sup> of his father and led by father and mother both to hope that intrigue and political "protection" will get him exemption from military service.

<sup>1</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Aug. 26, 1899.

<sup>2</sup> Georges Pellissier observes: "Our manners permit young women no liberty; therefore, they marry to emancipate themselves." *Études de Litt. Contemp.*, ii, 103.

<sup>3</sup> The case of Jean-Jacques and his father, also that of Dumas père and Dumas fils—if *Un Père Prodigé* is trustworthy evidence—illustrate "comradeship." The most striking example in recent French literature is seven-year-old Georgie Houziers, who regularly calls his father "comrade." (Fr. de Croisset, *Le Cœur Dispose*.) Irène de Rysbergue is both her sons' comrade and confidante. (H. Bataille, *Maman Colibri*.) Marcel Prévost portrays a mother who confides to her grown son her liaison with a married man. (*Les Anges Gardiens*.) Saint-Marc Girardin, who traces this "comradeship" to the sentimental philosophy of the eighteenth century, says: "A father who endeavors to become his son's comrade lowers the dignity of his character, and lowers it without profit." *Cours de Litt.*, i, 292.

The theme of *La Couvée* has been treated, or at least touched on, in several other works worthy of attention. Some of these emphasize the relations between parent and child from a disciplinary standpoint; others stress more particularly certain aspects of home training as it affects the child's future. Still others generalize the theme, making the characters broadly representative.

*La Sacrifiée* (*The Sacrificed Daughter*, 1907), a drama by Gaston Devore, shows the evil results of parental partiality. "The French family," the author says, in commenting on his play, "is undergoing evolution. As a result of this, it is passing through a grave crisis, which must profoundly affect the whole French social system. The majority of blighted lives and distorted characters are due to the atmosphere in which the children have been brought up."<sup>1</sup> According to the "reasoner," a child's will may suffer atrophy from excessive affection.<sup>2</sup> Children who receive too much parental attention are even more to be pitied than those who grow up in deplorable neglect.<sup>3</sup>

Madame Baudricourt, the mother of three

<sup>1</sup> G. Sorbets, *Illustration Théâtrale*, Oct. 19, 1907.

<sup>2</sup> In his drama, *Page Blanche* (1909), Devore satirizes parental prudery and advocates eugenic instruction.

<sup>3</sup> *Mademoiselle de Poncin* (P. Gaulot, 1883) depicts some of the surprises of home training. The hero, brought up by a vigilant, cultured mother, is vacillating, irresolute, and lacking in refinement. On the other hand, the heroine, whose mother was both physically and mentally incapable of directing her, possesses a strong character, a resolute will, and a refined manner.

daughters (Françoise, Suzanne, and Jeannine), has always bestowed her praise and attention upon her favourite, Suzanne, thus alienating the affection of Jeannine, whose frank, aggressive disposition resents her mother's partiality. Françoise, an old maid of thirty-five, quiet, obedient, and disinterested, does not complain. The father realizes that parents should treat their children alike, but he lets his wife have her way. Suzanne is sought in marriage by a swindler, Roizel, for his son, Julien. The young man, taught to know no other will but his father's, lacks the courage of self-assertion. Half unwittingly he allows his father to make a fraudulent marriage contract, by means of which Baudricourt is induced to despoil his other daughters in favour of Suzanne. Fortunately Roizel's designs are discovered in time to break the contract.

In both families the children are the victims of their parents' faults. And the fact that such parents sincerely believe that they are contributing to their children's happiness does not compensate for the wrong. Mme. Baudricourt repents, but too late to pacify her "sacrificed" daughter.<sup>1</sup> *La Sacrifiée*, which we shall mention again in connection with *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont*, is virtually a thesis drama, written in a much more

<sup>1</sup> In his masterpiece, *Poil de Carotte* (1894), Jules Renard shows the disastrous consequences of parental partiality. Poil de Carotte, the youngest of three children, is constantly maltreated by his mother. The little martyr finally rebels, and shaking his fist towards the house, cries: "Mean woman! I detest you!"



serious vein than *La Couvée*. Its chief defect consists in certain distortions, or obscurities, of character for the purpose of contrast.

In his later play, *L'Envolée* (*The Flight from the Nest*, 1914), Devore emphasizes particularly a young man's right to choose his vocation, and places parental failing with the father rather than with the mother. Durembourg, a furniture-manufacturer, not only wishes his son, Georges, to become his associate in business, but also to marry the daughter of his sole business competitor. The young man loves a girl in the designing department of his father's factory and has set his heart on being a scientist. Mme. Durembourg assists her son to marriage and provides him with capital for a scientific laboratory in Africa. There is a hint at reconciliation at the end in the father's breaking down after his son has gone. Here the mother is the champion of individualism, the father, of family tradition. Much as family tradition is to be commended, for the family derives much of its stability and vitality from traditional sources, Devore blames the narrowness with which the manufacturer insists on his convictions.

In still another play, *La Conscience de l'Enfant* (*The Child's Conscience*, 1899), Devore treats family affection and home training. Here it is the case of a grandfather, who seeks unduly to manage the affairs of his granddaughter as well as of her mother (his own daughter) and his son. In spite of his real love for them and of theirs for



him, all rebel.<sup>1</sup> In this as in his other plays, Devore is virtually in accord with Brioux as regards domestic education.

Family love and its consequences again form the theme of Paul Hervieu's *La Course du Flambeau* (*The Course of the Torch*, 1901), one of the greatest dramas of our time. It is the story of a grandmother with a daughter and a married granddaughter. When the granddaughter's and grandmother's welfare are at stake, the mother, Sabine, does not hesitate to sacrifice her mother in the interests of her daughter. The granddaughter, who is not very different from Fifine Graindor, seems to care only for herself and her husband. The dramatist shows that "*l'affection est comme les fleuves: elle descend et ne remonte pas.*"<sup>2</sup> In reality,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *L'Aigrette* (1912), a drama by Dario Niccodemi. Henry de Saint-Servan admires, respects, and almost fears his mother. Irresponsible, he knows nothing about their financial affairs, since the Countess, left heavily in debt at the death of her unworthy husband, has stoically concealed her troubles from him. Now she is arranging his marriage to Isabelle, whose dowry will pay their debts. But Henry's mistress, Suzanne, the wife of a speculator, is unwilling to release him. Moreover, she has given the Countess large sums of money. When Henry discovers these transactions, he says to his mother: "I wish you were dead, that I might pardon you." Mindful of her well-meant sacrifices, the Countess refuses to apologize.

<sup>2</sup> R. Doumic, *Deux Mondes*, May 15, 1901. The same critic remarks that Hervieu's theory holds neither of the ancient Greek patriarchal family nor of the Roman; that the principle is contradicted by both Anglo-Saxon and early French custom. In short, it is only, roughly speaking, in the French family of today that the downward trend of affection has prevailed.

the mother's love for her daughter is only a form of egotism, like Mme. Graindor's sentimental affection for Fifine.<sup>1</sup> Hervieu's philosophy, in still preserving at least the downward trend of affection, is only half as cruel as the stoic individualism of an Ibsen, who frees his Brand from all bonds of filial, conjugal, and parental love.<sup>2</sup>

The same theme has been treated by Paul Margueritte. In *Nous, les Mères* (*We Mothers*, 1913), he represents four generations: Mme. Gimones, her mother, her married daughter, Nicole, and her granddaughter, Marcelle, Nicole's little girl. Mme. Gimones loves Nicole affectionately, but, unlike Sabine in *La Course du Flambeau*, she is unwilling to sacrifice her mother for her. Tortured by her double obligation, she exclaims: "What shall I do? I cannot abandon my mother any longer." Later she regrets having exercised her tutelary rôle so long, since, according to the law of the human species, parents owe their affec-

<sup>1</sup> Poirier is actuated by the same motive in urging his daughter to separate from Gaston.

Thérèse Degrand, one of Lavedan's characters, is haunted by the subject of affection. "Ne serait-ce pas légitime," she says, "de jouir de ses parents, de ses frères et de ses sœurs, de ses enfants, de son mari, tout le temps qu'ils ont à être sur la terre? Au lieu de cela, nous n'avons qu'un morceau de la vie de nos parents, et ils n'ont qu'une moitié de la nôtre. *Une Cour*, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> The heroine in *La Femme au Masque* (1914), a novel by Louis Lefebure dedicated to Paul Hervieu, neglects her mother, not for her children, but because she is unwilling to leave her husband, whose repeated acts of infidelity only intensify her jealous love. See pp. 106, 178.

tion to their children rather than to their parents.<sup>1</sup>

This broad, general law, which Hervieu and Paul Margueritte have illustrated with convincing power, is not without exception, for in the recent drama we find two cases of the upward trend of affection.

The one, *L'Enfant de l'Amour* (*The Child of Gallantry*, 1911), by Henry Bataille, presents the situation of a courtesan loved and defended by her grown son, in spite of herself, so to speak. When her present lover, Rantz, attempts to break their seventeen-year liaison, in order to take a cabinet portfolio, the dutiful son, by threatening to compromise Rantz's daughter, compels him to marry his mother.

*Papa* (1911), the second of these plays, by Robert de Flers and H. de Caillavet, has for its hero another dutiful illegitimate son. Jean Bernard is legally recognized, unexpectedly, in his twenty-seventh year, by his father, Count de Larzac, whom he has never seen. The Count soon falls in love with his son's fiancée. Convinced that his sweetheart loves the Count more than himself, Jean withdraws in his father's favour, explaining his renunciation in the following words: "Ordi-

<sup>1</sup> In *Femmes Nouvelles*, a novel by Paul and Victor Margueritte we read: "Hélène (who had just become engaged to be married) did not even attempt to excuse herself, or to explain to her mother how natural it was that children, while still remaining tenderly affectionate towards their parents, should begin life for themselves."

narily parents sacrifice themselves for their children. This time it is the contrary."<sup>1</sup>

After noting such aspects of our theme as harmful home training, parental partiality, and affection in its broad sense, we now come to an author who may almost be said to have written a sequel to Brieux's comedy. In *La Peur de Vivre* (*The Fear of Life*, 1902), the novel already quoted, Henry Bordeaux deepens and broadens the theme of *La Couvée*, giving it greater social importance. The egotism of the Graindor parents was limited to the desire of seeing their offspring well provided for; here egotism is a principle of life with the parents themselves, whose motto is: "*Avant tout il faut assurer sa tranquillité.*"<sup>2</sup> This novel depicts practically the same evils as those painted in *La*

<sup>1</sup> The theme of family solidarity and paternal discipline plays a certain rôle in two other dramas that were running at the same time in Paris this same year (1911): *Le Tribun* (Paul Bourget) and *L'Apôtre* (P. H. Loyson). In each case the father is a cabinet minister, whose son becomes implicated in a scandal. But as might be expected, the dénouements differ radically. Bourget's "tribune," a socialist opposed to paternal authority and family solidarity, who would make the individual the social unit, finds that his theory breaks down lamentably in application; for he instinctively shields his guilty son. Loyson's "apostle" of skepticism, on the contrary, delivers his son into the hands of the law, though his disillusion is as complete as the tribune's, since he finds that his son's education, which he thought complete, lacks one all-important element: moral instruction.

<sup>2</sup> Émile Faguet asserts that for a century the French people have fashioned their jurisprudence, their professional life, their family life, and their social life all with a view to avoiding responsibility. *Horreur des Responsabilités*, p. 1.



*Couvée*, only in a different generation. Fifine Graindor's *veulerie* has become characteristic of Alice Dulaurens's parents. To this "fear of life" Bordeaux attributes several of the disintegrating forces that are sapping the vitality from the French nation. His egotists shirk the responsibilities and burdens of life, avoid its risks and dangers, leave all sacrifices to the heroic few. This egotism accounts for the hordes of applicants seeking public employment. It is largely responsible for the shameful bartering in dowries, a subject treated by Brioux in *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont*. It drives many persons to celibacy and prompts others to limit their family to one child. For, "donner la vie," to quote Bordeaux, "*devient une responsabilité trop pesante, une charge trop pénible.*" If parents have few children, for that very reason they are inclined to spoil them and to insist on keeping them in their home.<sup>\*</sup>

Many fathers and mothers [the author says] cannot consent to a separation from their children; hence they dissuade them from embracing broad careers demanding initiative, or from marriage that would necessitate residence in a distant locality, but which would prove to be of great moral value. Out of sentimental egotism they stifle their children's

\* Paul Doumer remarks that the children of large families seem to succeed better in life than others. *Livre de mes Fils*, p. 159. Restif de la Bretonne was of the same opinion. "De nombreux enfants," he declares, "sont toujours vertueux; un fils, une fille uniques sont le plus souvent des monstres." *Les Françaises*, vol. iv. Cf. E. Demolins, *La Supériorité des Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 83, 95.



initiative and impose upon them an enervating tutelage.

Although *La Couvée* would have greater significance if Brieux had not too often sacrificed seriousness for comic effect, the testimony of other writers, it is clear, amply corroborates his assertion that the relation between parents and children is a problem of grave importance. It would be erroneous, however, to conclude that all the young people in recent French literature, and still more all the young people in France, are ill-bred. Good breeding remains the rule. But not every boy can be kept constantly over his books, like a John Stuart Mill; nor can all children be expected to imitate the submissive conduct of a Pasteur. Nobody would want all young people's characters fashioned after one and the same fixed model of perfection. Though Anatole France thinks that French parents do not bring up their children well for lack of firmness, he is convinced that the stern paternal discipline of former centuries would be of no value in a modern democracy with its own ideals and aspirations.<sup>1</sup> Even the conservative critic, René Doumic, considers the change to gentler and friendlier relations natural and inevitable, since frequently children do not belong to the same social class as their parents.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Vie Littér.*, ii, 246-250. "Nous sommes doux, affectueux, tolérants," he says, "mais nous ne savons plus ni imposer ni subir l'obéissance."

<sup>2</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Mar. 19, 1892.

Our survey of the rapid evolution of French domestic education makes it clear that, like all social questions, this one is complex and subject to many collateral influences. Religion, public opinion, the form of government, and legislation are all influences of great importance. But legislation, as we have seen in the case of Rousseau, gives only a formal and official sanction to a movement already created by the individual or by public sentiment. And all influences can be more or less successfully counteracted, in any case, by the parents themselves, who are, or should be, the architects of their offspring's fate. This broad latitude being left to the individual family, we may expect a wide divergence of opinion regarding the ideal to be aimed at. But however much authors and critics differ as to the relative merits of rigid discipline and self-government, they are agreed that the tendency of the nineteenth century, which Gustave Lanson characterizes as "*idolâtre de l'enfance*,"<sup>1</sup> was towards the emancipation of the child.

With almost equal certainty, it may be said that this emancipation has now passed the high-water mark. Its excesses have either produced a reaction or have been followed by a more or less harmonious adjustment of the younger generation to conditions of broader freedom. While J. Porcher's severe arraignment of French domestic education—that parents catered to all the whims of their

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. de la Litt. Fr.*, 10th ed., p. 39.

children and made them sovereign lords<sup>1</sup>—was in the main true at the time he wrote (1897), it no longer corresponds to the facts of today.<sup>2</sup> The *laisser-aller* spirit following the defeat of 1870 has given way to a firm determination to live, to a sportsman-like desire to keep in the best physical condition, as is shown by the recent vogue of athletic sports in France.<sup>3</sup> One result is a greater seriousness and sense of responsibility on the part of children, which contributes much towards the elimination of disobedience and family differences. And the domestic influence of these same young people in their rôle as future parents is still more promising.

If we are to believe André Lichtenberger, the new generation, which is said to prefer Pascal to Voltaire,<sup>4</sup> cares little for ministerial programmes, sterile political wrangling, and anti-clericalism.<sup>5</sup> Instead of tearing down, these young people, having broken their "chains,"<sup>6</sup> intend to build up. They have a horror of Renan's ironical smile and

<sup>1</sup> P. 118 of this Chapter.

<sup>2</sup> So a competent authority, M. Adrien Bertrand, informs me.

<sup>3</sup> Alphonse Séché speaks of "cet extraordinaire élan sportif que l'on constate partout, lequel a modifié en quelque sorte l'état d'âme des générations nouvelles." *Le Caractère de la Poésie Contemp.*, p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> A. Beaunier, *Deux Mondes*, Sept. 1, 1913.

<sup>5</sup> *Le Sang Nouveau* (1914), p. 84. Ernest Psichari, a grandson of Renan, says: "Il faut agir. Il faut oublier les incertitudes, les discussions, stériles du passé." *L'Appel des Armes*, p. 119.

<sup>6</sup> A. Beaunier, *Deux Mondes*, Sept. 1, 1913.

his dilettantism.<sup>1</sup> As pragmatists, disciples of a Boutroux and a Bergson, they reject uncertainty and ideology (in its depreciative sense) and demand an active life of immediate realities.<sup>2</sup> But notwithstanding their disgust at vain political quibbling, they will take care not to imitate their fathers by delegating their legislative business to a "band of demagogues."<sup>3</sup>

According to a phrase often attributed to Alfred Capus, then, *tout s'arrange*. It is impossible to determine to what extent the spirit of the new generation may be due to the influence of such men as Bourget, Brieux, Barrès, Bergson, Boutroux, and Bordeaux; or whether democracy has succeeded, as Legouvé believed it inevitably would succeed, in bridging the gulf between parents and children, so that now fathers and mothers may be as fond as Mme. Graindor without any of her foolishness. The change may be due largely to the general law of reaction. However this may be, for the present we are glad to content ourselves with the opinions of critics, who see in the change an accomplished fact destined to last. And the splendid bearing of the young French soldier in the present war confirms this optimism.

<sup>1</sup> Gaston Riou, *Aux Écoutes de la France qui Vient* (1913).

<sup>2</sup> Paul Flat, "La Jeune Génération," *Rev. Bleue*, Feb. 1, 1913.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER VI

### POLITICS IN RECENT FRENCH LITERATURE

*L'Engrenage* (Brieux)—*La Vie Publique* (Fabre)—*Le Candidat* (Flaubert)—*Le Député Leveau* (Lemaître)—*La Crise* (Boniface)—*Une Journée Parlementaire* (Barrès)—*La Proie* (Béranger)—*Les Morts Qui Parlent* (Vogüé)—*La Poigne* (Julien)—*Les Parlementeurs* (Daudet)—*Leurs Figures* (Barrès)—*Robert Perceval* (Lefèvre).

IN the life of a modern nation, everything ends in politics or is indirectly influenced by politics.<sup>1</sup> This is true particularly of a country like France, which, besides her million functionaries dependent upon political favour, her hordes of tried and untried politicians and "duly recommended" office-seekers, possesses scores of former cabinet ministers, "ministrables," and aspirants to that honour awaiting an opportunity to "serve the people."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. Bordeaux, *La Peur de Vivre*, p. xiv. Cf. Mme. de Staël: "Political institutions alone can form the character of a nation." (*De l'Allemagne*, pt. i, ch. 2.) Lamartine, carried away by his political ardour in 1848, exclaimed: "I regret the poetry I composed in the indolence of my youth: my real vocation is politics."

<sup>2</sup> In Chapter IV, we have noted the tendency of the French people to regard the State as a responsible protector and dispenser of favours. Cf.: E. Demolins, *La Supériorité des Anglo-Saxons* (1897),



For a hundred years the French have occupied themselves more with political questions than with social and moral reforms. Even when considering social reforms, they have had a political *arrière-pensée*.<sup>1</sup>

This abnormal political activity, while due to various influences, can be traced primarily, like so many other problems of France, to the difficulties of adjusting the New Régime to the Old.<sup>2</sup> The breaking up of the Old Régime let loose a deluge of Utopian theories, with infinite attendant wrangling and political oratory.

With all her array of political advisers, France is still seeking her destiny.<sup>3</sup> Her statesmen have repeatedly diagnosed her case. Various ones have prescribed treatment guaranteed to cure her ills. Yet her political differences remain unsettled. Is it true, as certain statesmen and critics maintain, that these troubles are due to the present parliamentary system of government based on universal suffrage? Or would the system work, if

p. 30; G. Deherme, *La Crise Soc.*, 1910, p. 156. According to E. Dimnet (*France Herself Again*, 1914, p. 259), however, government careers are at present comparatively deserted in France.

<sup>1</sup> J. Gaultier, *Rev. Bleue*, Apr. 25, 1914.

<sup>2</sup> In Gaston Riou's recent book, *Aux Écoutes de la France qui Vient*, we read: "M. Seippel, one of the ablest writers of our neighbour Republic [Switzerland], was justified in giving to his work on modern France the title *Les Deux France*. The expression is literally true. The Revolution caused a schism in our country."

<sup>3</sup> "La Révolution française a fondé une société, elle cherche encore son gouvernement." Prévost-Paradol, *La France Nouvelle* (1868), p. 296.

the machinery were entrusted to the right men? For those responsible for the operation of the system are more bitterly assailed, if possible, than the system itself. Finally, what substitute do the adversaries of the present system propose?

These are questions about which the French people differ radically. Naturally a foreigner would be presumptuous to hold an opinion about their solution, unless he obtained it from French sources. Should the testimony which I am to offer of French men of letters—particularly dramatists and novelists—seem biased, the investigator is not to blame if one of the two sides fails to submit its evidence.

It is but natural that the French parliamentary system should receive criticism, since, in matters of government, the established order of things almost invariably appears less desirable than conditions which might be. For years the great majority of the leading novelists and men of thought who have shaped literary opinion in France have been hostile to the present ideals of republican democracy.<sup>1</sup> That is why they attribute to politicians the basest ambition, the most absolute doctrinal skepticism, and an *arrivisme féroce*.

A whole literature of satire [says J. Lux], full of spirit and power, and noteworthy for such masterpieces as *Leurs Figures*, has developed in the last thirty years. From the date of *Numa Roumestan*

<sup>1</sup> Exceptions are Hugo, Zola, Anatole France, and certain contemporary realists.

and *Le Député Leveau* down to our own time, the wrath of writers has been growing.<sup>1</sup>

This critic makes the assertion that even the partisans of radical convictions are not less implacable than the conservatives toward the representatives of universal suffrage.

And yet people express surprise [he goes on to say], that our young university-trained men should manifest so little enthusiasm for the republican régime. Still greater is the discredit of parliamentary government among the middle classes.<sup>2</sup> For this discredit the shameful "errors" of Parliament are chiefly to blame; but it is unquestionable that influential authors have greatly disseminated and intensified the hostility.

After making all due allowance for partisan exaggerations, we must admit that the violent tone in which French politicians and universal suffrage are denounced sets a new record.

At the present time [says the political economist, Paul Leroy-Beaulieu] politicians of all grades, from city councillors to cabinet ministers, with a few exceptions, represent a class of the vilest, most narrow-minded sycophants that mankind has ever known. Their sole aim is to flatter and encourage popular prejudices, which, however, they themselves share

<sup>1</sup> "La Politique et les Lettres," *Rev. Bleue*, Feb. 13, 1909.

<sup>2</sup> Albert Desjardins, a high official of the French judiciary, speaks of France as "ce pays où la politique imprègne et corrompt tout. . . ." *La Liberté dans l'État Moderne* (1894), p. 95.

vaguely, for the most part, since they have never devoted a moment's time to reflection and observation.<sup>1</sup>

Alfred Fouillée, an eminent philosopher and economist noted for his reasonable views, writes: "It is held that a people has the government it deserves. No, France does not deserve the government imposed upon it by the caste of usurpers called politicians."<sup>2</sup> Similarly Jules Roche, a former minister of the Republic, concludes, in a serious study of the French parliamentary system: "We are the worst governed country in the world."<sup>3</sup> After such denunciations, even the epithets of a conservative like Bourget sound mild. Stigmatizing the members of Parliament as the "*quinze-mille*,"<sup>4</sup> he declares that these representatives are not an unfortunate exception, but the inevitable consequence of the electoral system. Universal suffrage, according to Émile Faguet, is the cause of what he terms the intellectual and moral incompetency of French legislators.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the importance of French political life for more than a century, the novel and the drama began to wield a sharp rod of parliamentary satire only about forty years ago.<sup>6</sup> In the eighteenth

<sup>1</sup> *Traité d'Écon. Pol.*, 4th ed., vol. iv, p. 618.

<sup>2</sup> *La France au point de vue moral* (1900), p. 407.

<sup>3</sup> *Figaro*, June 11, 1897.

<sup>4</sup> *Pages de Crit.*, ii, 37. This epithet has reference to the fact that in 1907 the members of Parliament passed a law raising their salary from 9000 to 15,000 francs a year.

<sup>5</sup> *Culte de l'Incompétence* (1910), p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Fénelon's *Dialogues des Morts* and *Télémaque* were veiled



century, such attempts were limited to a few dramas, directed against the tax-gatherers (*Turcaret* and Marivaux's *Le Triomphe de Plutus*), or against judicial and nobiliary abuses (*Figaro*). Marie-Joseph Chénier and the authors of the revolutionary period are unimportant in this respect. Nor did the First Empire, the Restoration, or the July Monarchy produce anything noteworthy, except perhaps certain political novels of Balzac.<sup>1</sup> Even under the Second Empire, the "intellectuals," while for the most part cordially detesting the established order of things, did not find in the existing form of parliamentary government material for literary satire.<sup>2</sup>

All this time the writers of the liberal opposition yearned for a return to the Republic, which they thought of as "*si belle*," according to Victor Giraud, simply because it did not exist.<sup>3</sup> They

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criticisms of the political abuses of the seventeenth century. And we still marvel at the mordant satire of La Bruyère's *Caractères*. But the same spirit would not have been tolerated on the stage.

<sup>1</sup> Esp. *Albert Savarus* and *Le Député d'Arcis*. The latter gives but a distorted salon-idea of French politics. The only incident characteristic of our time is the scene which represents the voters bargaining with the various candidates (pt. ii, ch. xvii). In *Albert Savarus*, it is a question of government candidacy (under the July Monarchy) based on a system of intrigue.

<sup>2</sup> Unless we count such a work as Feuillet's *M. de Camors* (1867). This novel represents an electoral campaign under the Second Empire as purely a matter of diplomacy and strategy.

<sup>3</sup> "Bilan de la Génération littér. de 1870," *Deux Mondes*, Jan. 1, 1914. Jules Lemaître tells us that in 1860 almost the entire body of students were republicans and sworn enemies of the Empire. *Rev. Bleue*, June 13, 1885.



were convinced that the hallowed Revolutionary principles of liberty and equality would, if given a fair trial, adjust political differences. Thus the partisans of the Third Republic at first had unbounded faith in their representatives. "They believed in the possibility of emulation from noble motives," says Frédéric Loliée. "Words had a strange power. A fever of credulity animated those who uttered them and those who received them with eager ear."<sup>1</sup> This fact would account for the comparatively few political dramas and novels between 1870 and 1890.<sup>2</sup> But the ardour of voters had cooled even before the Panama scandal (1893), which disillusioned the credulous and gravely compromised parliamentary government.<sup>3</sup> From this date on, dramas and novels dealing with political life and the indispensable "*chéquards*" sprang up like mushrooms.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "L'Homme pol. à la scène et dans le livre," *Rev. Bleue*, Mar. 8, 1902.

<sup>2</sup> Sardou, *Rabagas* (1872); Flaubert, *Le Candidat* (1874); A. Daudet, *Numa Roumestan* (1880); Jules Claretie, *M. le Ministre* (1881); *Candidat* (1887); Jules Lemaître, *Le Député Leveau* (1890).

<sup>3</sup> H. Roux-Costadan, a member of Parliament, writing recently, says: "The enthusiasms of yesterday have faded away. The miracle of the loaves and fishes has not been performed. Hopes are shattered. The charm is broken." *Le Matin*, Jan. 29, 1914.

<sup>4</sup> Omitting such questions as religion and race antagonism, we get the following partial list between 1894 and 1912:

1894 *L'Engrenage* (Brieux).

1894 *Une Journée Parlementaire* (Barrès).

1894 *Cabotins* (Pailleron).

1895 *La Crise* (Maurice Boniface).

These works profess to scrutinize and test everything from the basic principles of 1789 to the latest phases of political life manifested in such details as local elections, judicial matters, military affairs, and colonial government. Systems and institutions are attacked; legislators and functionaries are arraigned and vilified. In their efforts to unmask bribery and scandal, while some authors remain sober and sincere, others become spiteful muck-rakers. To complicate the situation, the regrettable "Affaire" intensifies the bitterness and finally necessitates a partial regrouping of political parties.

In this heterogenous mass of political literature, the predominating theme, the principle most vio-

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- 1897 *Les Déracinés* (Barrès), *La Proie* (Bérenger).
  - 1897 *Le Repas du Lion* (Curel), *Les Deux Noblesses* (Lavedan).
  - 1898 *Les Mauvais Bergers* (Mirbeau).
  - 1899 *Les Morts Qui Parlent* (Vogüé), *Le Ferment* (Estaunié).
  - 1900 *La Robe Rouge* (Brieux).
  - 1900 *La Clairière* (Donnay and Descaves).
  - 1900 *Robert Perceval* (Lefèvre).
  - 1901 *La Vie Publique* (Fabre).
  - 1901 *Le Pays des Parlementeurs* (L. Daudet).
  - 1902 *Leurs Figures* (Barrès).
  - 1902 *L'Étape* (Bourget), *La Poigne* (Jullien).
  - 1903 *Les Affaires* (Mirbeau), *Clarisse Arbois* (Boniface).
  - 1905 *Les Ventres Dorés* (Fabre).
  - 1906 *La Griffes* (Bernstein), *L'Attentat* (Capus and Descaves).
  - 1908 *Le Foyer* (Mirbeau).
  - 1909 *La Rencontre* (Bertin).
  - 1910 *La Barricade* (Bourget).
  - 1911 *Le Tribun* (Bourget), *L'Apôtre* (Loyson).
  - 1911 *Les Sauterelles* (Fabre).
  - 1912 *La Crise* (Bourget and Beaunier).

lently assailed, is naturally the dogma of political equality. For with universal suffrage in its present sense the whole parliamentary system stands or falls. Many writers condemn universal suffrage without reserve. Others at least deplore the evils resulting from it, though by no means convinced that a system based on unequal suffrage would be practicable. To this second group belong Eugène Brieux and Émile Fabre, the two dramatists who, in their respective works, *L'Engrenage* and *La Vie Publique*, have treated the theme with what will seem to an impartial foreigner the most satisfactory results.

*L'Engrenage* (*The Cogwheels*) is the story of a charitable and upright manufacturer, Rémoussin, who in the serious sense of the word "consents" to become a political candidate. The tactics of universal suffrage impose upon him one capitulation of conscience after another until he finds himself implicated in a bribery scandal, from which he succeeds in extricating himself only at the expense of his good name, whereas the big thieves with serene conscience are not dishonoured. The comedy was first played by the Cercle des Escholiers (Comédie Parisienne), May 16, 1894, and later in the same year by the troupe of the Théâtre des Nouveautés. The first and last acts are set in a provincial city; the second, in Paris. No play of Brieux suffers more in analysis than this, because in none are there subtler shades of humour in the dialogue.

Not having obtained a majority in the regular election, owing to his uncompromising integrity, Ré moussin, who cares more for his factory than for the diversions of Parisian life, refuses to carry the contest to a second balloting. Finally, however, he yields to the persuasive appeals of his friend Morin, a senator, and a deputation of voters, but only on condition that there be no pressure, no treating, no promises.<sup>1</sup> Ré moussin's object in entering politics is to render his country some much-needed service. His ideal is a journalist named Balbigny, whose daily articles expose with implacable severity the incompetency of ministers and deputies. In reading these, his blood boils with indignation.<sup>2</sup> Ré moussin declares that, if elected, he will not vote for the duty on wheat. Senator Morin remarks that he need only say that he will vote for it: when the measure comes up, he can feign illness.<sup>3</sup> But, he points out, since Ré moussin's district is made up largely of farmers, it would

<sup>1</sup> Thus Ré moussin becomes entangled in the political "cog-wheels." Likewise in Vogüé's *Les Morts Qui Parlent* (ch. vi), the peasantry implore Andarran—that is, M. de Vogüé himself—to save them from the "wolf" by consenting to become a candidate. Andarran at first refuses, but finding it impossible to resist the peasants, he finally yields.

<sup>2</sup> When Barral attempts to persuade Perraud to stand, the latter refuses, saying: "I know too well the uselessness of the effort of one honest man against so many." *La Poigne*, i.

<sup>3</sup> M. de Grèges, one of Jules Lemaître's politicians, goes hunting to avoid committing himself in such cases. (*Le Député Leveau*, i, 2.) Pégomas, M. de Laversée's campaign manager in *Cabotins* (1894), promises everything in the candidate's name, but says to him: "Once elected, you can settle those details."



be his duty to protect their interests, regardless of the general interests of France.<sup>1</sup> When Rémoussin again pleads for a strictly honest campaign, Morin convinces him that threats are absolutely necessary to meet those of the opposing side; they must pit terror against terror. Rémoussin having again yielded, Morin proceeds to do what he will. An innkeeper intends to intimidate the merchants from whom he buys supplies by threatening to boycott them if Vaudrey, Rémoussin's opponent, is elected.<sup>2</sup> With public charity in his hands, the village mayor practically marks the ballots of the poor. Taulard, a voter in the district, is circulating a whale story: Vaudrey keeps in his park a whale which consumes an enormous amount of grain each day; when the people learn why they

<sup>1</sup> The triumph of local and personal interests over national interests is satirized by Feuillet. (*M. de Camors*, pt. ii, ch. i.) G. de Rivalière thinks that a politician's attitude, at present, is determined by interests and passions of the moment, rarely by an idea or a principle. (*Rev. Bleue*, Jan. 11, 1896.) Scherer remarks sarcastically: "What's a deputy for, if not to look after the interests of his district?" (*La Dém. et la France*, p. 26.) "Nobody will gainsay the statement," Ernest Dimnet has recently declared, "that since 1876 . . . the deputies have sought primarily their own advantage, and thought of the country's welfare only in connection with it." (*France Herself Again*, p. 68.) E. d'Eichthal brings the same charge against the legislators of France. *Souveraineté du Peuple et Gouvernement* (1895), p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> "Paulin Renard . . . représente un de ces départements voisins de Paris où l'une des grosses industries est le nourrissement des enfants assistés de la Seine. . . . Un électeur vote-t-il mal? Renard menace aussitôt le délinquant du retrait de l'enfant. Il tient par là tout son arrondissement." *Les Morts Qui Parlent*, ch. vii.



have no bread, they will vote against him.<sup>1</sup> But when Taulard wants Rémoussin to promise that he will get his son exempted from military service,<sup>2</sup> the candidate refuses with indignation. On Taulard's threatening to go and see Vaudrey, however, Mme. Rémoussin makes a note of the request, promising to arrange the matter with the prefect's wife.<sup>3</sup> Morin having circulated the report

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Benoist assures us that in 1898 in certain French electoral districts—even in Paris, also—candidates defeated their opponents by circulating reports to the effect that the latter had had cargoes of wheat sunk in the Atlantic. (*Deux Mondes*, Sept. 15, 1898.) Marie Antoinette and Foulon were accused of similar crimes. In H. Bordeaux's *Le Lac Noir*, the examining magistrate says (ch. x): "In the country districts, all absurdities are believed. Knowing this, candidates for office surpass Baron Münchhausen himself, and the liar with the greatest effrontery gets the biggest vote."

<sup>2</sup> In *La Dém. et la France* (p. 34), Scherer writes: "Universal suffrage has such an exalted conception of the favour with which it honours its representatives that it does not hesitate to ask every conceivable service of them. An election thus becomes a commercial transaction." Or again, according to Maurice Spronck, the voter says to the candidate: "In return for my support, you will use your influence to obtain for me favours, subsidies, and decorations." The same tactics are noted by Flaubert (*Le Candidat*) and Daudet (*Numa Roumestan*).

The custom originated as early as the Restoration. Speaking of the French Parliament of 1817, E. Spuller declares that "the deputies of the Centre wanted offices for their children, their relations, their friends, and their constituents; and today our deputies want offices just as under the Restoration. It was the upper bourgeoisie who inoculated the French nation with this poison. Beneficiaries of the Revolution, they treated France as a conquered country." *Royer-Collard* (1895), p. 151.

<sup>3</sup> The situation is met with repeatedly. In Becque's *La*

that Ré moussin will vote for the tariff on grain, he is elected as a protectionist, contrary to his political convictions.

In Act II we are in Ré moussin's office in Paris. Each mail brings numerous requests for aid, subsidies, and exemptions<sup>1</sup>—a severe drain on the deputy's finance; for his factory, entrusted to the management of his prospective son-in-law, no longer yields anything. But politically Ré moussin has achieved great success with a speech in favour of a tariff on wheat.<sup>2</sup> What a thrill of pride he feels, as he stands on the rostrum facing the diplomatic corps, knowing that every word he utters is being taken down by stenographers, to be transmitted by wire to the remotest corners of France and of Europe!<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately an act of his wife threatens to destroy his bright political future. Having boxed a police officer's ears in attempting to override a municipal regulation, because she was a deputy's wife, Mme. Ré moussin has been arrested. In her dilemma she has appealed for aid to Mme. Bourdier, the mistress of

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*Parisienne*, the mother of Clotilde's lover obtains a position for Clotilde's husband after "les hommes compétents" have failed.

<sup>1</sup> This is a stock feature of French parliamentary life.

<sup>2</sup> D'Arnac, one of Lavedan's deputies, makes a speech on grain and the tariff every year. *Les Deux Noblesses*.

<sup>3</sup> "Our deputies are now nothing but tenors. Beaumarchais's *dancer* has been replaced by a *singer*. It is not ideas that counts, nor experience in public affairs, but the gift of gab." J. du Tillet, *Rev. Bleue*, Nov. 17, 1900.

the Minister of the Interior.<sup>1</sup> Mme. Bourdier sends word that Rémoussin must arrange the matter with the Minister, who is willing to receive him. But can Rémoussin accept the services of a Minister whom he and Balbigny have always designated with such epithets as "embezzler," "idiot," "thief," "*canaille*" . . . ? Still, rather than let his wife's indiscretion spoil his future, he decides to follow Mme. Bourdier's suggestion. It turns out that the "charming" reception accorded him by the Minister fully justifies the humiliation. Rémoussin now realizes that with their provincial narrowness he and his wife "did not understand the great man." Strange to say, Balbigny was chatting with the Minister when he called.

Next comes the best scene in the play.<sup>2</sup> The Marquis de Storn calls in the interests of the Simplon Tunnel Syndicate. The Company wants to sell its rights to the State for a hundred million francs, and Rémoussin is a member of the parliamentary commission appointed to examine the proposition. The Marquis is dignified, correct, and convincing. His cut-and-dried argument in favour of the Simplon project leaves nothing to be said. Everything is there, estimated, verified,

<sup>1</sup> While in the "provinces," the Rémoussins despised this "low woman," who now becomes their "chère cousine."

<sup>2</sup> It reminds one of Lechat's interview with the Marquis de Porcellet, which is also the best scene in Mirbeau's *Les Affaires Sont les Affaires*.

approved, legalized, dated, signed, stamped by the Italian government, etc. Our deputy promises his support if, after due examination, the proposition is as he now sees it. In starting to go, the Marquis leaves on the desk a cheque for 25,000 francs. Rémoussin, deeply offended, refuses the cheque. But when the Marquis explains to Mme. Rémoussin that the Company distributes annually a certain sum for "charity," she accepts it for a day-nursery. Moreover, the Marquis points out to Rémoussin that it is in no sense a bribe, since he had approved the Company's proposition before the cheque was offered. In order to overcome Rémoussin's last scruples, he shows him stubs of his cheque-book,<sup>1</sup> where are seen, among other names, Morin's and (who would believe it?) even Balbigny's . . . Balbigny, that model of integrity! Morin, in congratulating Rémoussin on his political "progress," says: "*Vous voilà dans le mouvement!*"

At the opening of the third act, the Rémoussin's are back in their provincial home. The press is investigating the Simplon affair. The Marquis de Storn has fled to England, and Rémoussin is in mortal fear of seeing his own name printed in a bribery scandal. Morin, better schooled in political corruption, does not share Rémoussin's

<sup>1</sup> In Becque's *Les Polichinelles*, the exploiters of the *Métal Imperator* bribe a member of the Institute to write up the invention "scientifically" for the sum of 20,000 francs, though the receipt reads for only 10,000 francs.



nervousness. Mme. Bourdier gives assurance that even if other names should be mentioned in the report, the Minister will suppress Remoussin's.<sup>1</sup> When, however, it is reported that both Rémoussin and Morin are in the fatal list, but that Balbigny has escaped, Rémoussin issues a statement acknowledging the receipt of the so-called bribe, resigns his office, and pays back the 25,000 francs. On receiving news that the Simplon investigation is to be buried, Mme. Rémoussin reproaches her husband for his stupidity: "If you had kept quiet, we should be 25,000 francs better off, and without dishonour."<sup>2</sup> In the final scene, a disorderly mob having congregated before Rémoussin's residence, the ex-deputy throws his official badge at the manifestants with the words: "Between you, the representatives of universal suffrage, and me, the mandatory, there is mutual corruption."<sup>3</sup> Outside

<sup>1</sup> Scathing satire on woman's influence in politics is found in Capus's *L'Aventurier* (1910), where the Baroness presumes to announce, if not dictate, the Prime Minister's official decisions. In *L'Adversaire* (1903), by the same author, Mme. Bréautin at least *predicts* ministerial appointments. In M. Boniface's comedy, *Clarisse Arbois* (1903), the old Duchess makes and unmakes ministries. Lechat, however, who is determined to purchase a seat in the Chamber, distrusts women in politics. *Les Affaires* (Mirbeau).

<sup>2</sup> "Very practical, these wives of deputies will hear nothing of restitution: *You dishonoured us by accepting money, but you would ruin us in wishing to return it.*" P. Gaultier, "La Caricature de Mœurs en France," *Rev. Bleue*, Sept. 8, 1897.

<sup>3</sup> "Under the French parliamentary system democracy is not the victim but the voluntary accomplice of the evil wrought." J. E. Bodley, *France*, ii, 129.



Morin begins a speech: "My friends, the common people's happiness is my earnest desire. . . ." To this all shout "*Vive Morin!*"<sup>1</sup>

The scene of *La Vie Publique* (*Public Life*), which was first produced at the Renaissance Theatre, in 1901, seven years after *L'Engrenage*, is laid in Salente (that is, Marseilles<sup>2</sup>). Four political parties are in the field: the radical socialists led by Ferrier, the Mayor of Salente; the labour party, whose candidate is Maréchal, a smooth-tongued demagogue; the clericals, represented by Petit-champ; the royalists, with the Marquis de Riols at their head. We are told that the present radical socialist council is the first respectable body of municipal officers that Salente has had in ten years. Indeed, their predecessors were arrested for bribery. The terms "graft," "rake-off," "bribery," "embezzlement" are in the air. The capital issue is, whether the *Quartier de l'Évêché* shall be expropriated and rebuilt for sanitary reasons. The newspapers and all the candidates for the mayoralty except Ferrier favour expropriation. Ferrier opposes the project on account of

<sup>1</sup> An identical situation in Fabre's *Les Ventres Dorés* (1905).

<sup>2</sup> "Émile Fabre is a young member of the Marseilles bar. It is from his native city that he brings us those tableaux of municipal elections pulsating with truth, in which, under the name of Ferrier, mayor of Salente, the inhabitants of the great Phocæan city will recognize their celebrated compatriot, M. Flaissières, struggling in the midst of local intrigues in which the street car strike, that caused so much comment in the press, plays a predominant part." E. Stoullig, *Annales* (1901), p. 437.

the enormous expense it would necessitate. On the other hand, he proposes to build schools and hospitals, in order to check clerical influence. The Mayor has made many enemies by his straightforwardness and his refusal to stoop to crooked compromises. A dangerous opponent is Senator Guébriant, a *brasseur d'affaires véreuses*.

The indecisive results of the first election vex Ferrier who, like Rémoussin, has neglected his factory in the interests of public welfare. The labour unions and syndicates now offer to support him in return for higher wages, shorter hours, etc. At the same time, Guébriant's mistress proposes an alliance between Ferrier and her lover, in the hope of furthering the Senator's political plans. The Mayor considers the humiliating proposition while entering into negotiations with the royalists and the clericals.<sup>1</sup> At the conference, presided over by Monseigneur de Belmont, a thoroughly lifelike character, representatives of the banking interests and of the tramway company are also present.<sup>2</sup> This is the strongest scene in the play, and one of the best in the entire recent drama. Propositions are made and considered. All parties are fair and calm, but firm. Finally, Ferrier accepts the expropriation issue in spite of himself, promising numerous favours. The negotiations once closed, he sits as if stunned by the enormity of his capitulations. So when an editor who has

<sup>1</sup> Like Rémoussin, he becomes entangled in the *engrenage*.

<sup>2</sup> Fabre has a similar scene in *Les Vainqueurs* (ii, 4).

been violently attacking him comes to offer his support if Ferrier will place his son's name on the ticket, the Mayor cries out in a thundering voice: "I'm tired of all this trickery that I'm in over my head . . . tired of shaking hands with rascals in order to get votes. . . . To cheat and be cheated, to lie, to corrupt and be corrupted, and promise, promise, positions, jobs, money . . . I've got enough of it!"

But after all, he finds it necessary to seek Guébriant's aid. And when his cause seems hopelessly lost, he is saved, at the last moment, by the returns from the precincts controlled by Guébriant. In his joy, Ferrier, forgetting all his former ideals, embraces the Senator's mistress, who has come to congratulate him.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the once stern, uncompromising Mayor has become the protégé of the Catholics, the ally of the royalists, the tool of the moneyed interests. He has accepted the expropriation issue, abandoned his school and hospital projects, promised favours and exemptions right and left.

Such is universal suffrage.

*La Vie Publique*, which shows essentially the same results of universal suffrage as *L'Engrenage*, is a stronger drama. It is more vivid, lifelike, and human. Brieux's piece is exceedingly humorous, even to the point of farce; Fabre's is serious from beginning to end. And its realism would satisfy

<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the Rémoussins owe everything to their "chère cousine Bourdier."

a Flaubert. In painting his milieu, he has shown art superior to Brieux's. His success would have been even greater, had his work been more condensed. The second act to some extent covers the purpose of the third.<sup>1</sup> The play is overcharged with episodes. Each particular incident, we readily admit, may be taken straight from life; but the imagination cannot conceive of so many incidents in one election.<sup>2</sup>

Parts of Brieux's work are excellent. The first act is uniformly good—for its comedy, its exposition of character, and the skilful introduction of argument to support the author's thesis. Nothing in the play is better than the scenes of the second act in which the Marquis de Storn appears. Sober, delicately handled, natural, they are without the slightest tinge of caricature. But Mme. Rémous-sin's arrest is handled a bit clumsily; the matter would have been reported to the press immediately, whereas Mme. Rémous-sin keeps it from her husband for several days. Still less probable, from the standpoint of technique, is Rémous-sin's inter-

<sup>1</sup> This device is a heritage of the naturalist school, whose process was to "juxtaposer des tableaux nuancés et dégradés de façon à nous faire assister à la progressive déchéance d'un caractère." (R. Doumic, *Deux Mondes*, Nov. 1, 1901.) The same process can be detected in *L'Engrenage*.

<sup>2</sup> The following interesting details by Fabre himself explain in part his success in the political drama. "I always take notes for a long time in advance," he says. "For *La Vie Publique* I had for several years attended political meetings, carefully studying the language and psychology of the voting masses."

view with the Minister, for only a one-minute scene takes place on the stage while the conference is supposed to be held. Then often the comedy is so light that we cannot take Rémoussin seriously enough.<sup>1</sup> Except in a few situations, he is too credulous and yields too naïvely to the temptations of the *engrenage*. For the sake of contrast, at other times, he is too emphatic in his determination to live up to his ideals. Such exaggeration mars the dramatic illusion. The value is not lessened in the least of plays by Courteline and Tristan Bernard that one would rarely take their characters seriously: it is evident that they are intended only as exaggerations. But in a play like *L'Engrenage*, dealing with vital national interests, the principal characters should keep at a safe distance from farce. If Brieux's purpose had been to amuse rather than to persuade and reform, he would have succeeded admirably.

Brieux is hopeful of reform despite the ironical conclusion of the play, with its emphasis on the stupidity and ingratitude of the populace. In a drama exposing the evils of universal suffrage, it is natural that blame should rest on the voters as well as on their representatives. Yet in spite of the discouraging outlook, reform is possible so

<sup>1</sup> R. Doumic diagnoses thus the inherent weakness, so to speak of political comedy: "Of necessity it neglects the vital interests that are involved, minimizes the importance of the questions it broaches, substitutes the satire of persons for the play of ideas, and replaces living characters by marionettes intended to make stupid people laugh." — *Rev. Bleue*, Mar. 19, 1892.



long as the tempted repent and regain their self-respect.

*L'Engrenage* refutes brilliantly the claim that politics is unwelcome in the theatre.<sup>1</sup> The play must have satisfied those who regretted that no political piece had been produced since Sardou's *Rabagas* (1872).<sup>2</sup> If not here first in art and force, then, Brioux once more—as so often—is first in having the courage to risk a new dramatic venture. It is no wonder that in this he has had followers. He is likely to have more, for his theme bids fair to remain a burning question as long as universal suffrage exists.<sup>3</sup> Even if the newspapers were always whole-hearted in the interests of political reform, even if they never became mere commercial enterprises, or even servants of capital, they could never put before the people so vividly as the drama the undercurrents, the wirepulling, and the bartering that are too common in French elections.

Are these evils to remain common? Is it true that the present electoral system of France eliminates men of integrity and delivers the nation

<sup>1</sup> A. Bernheim, *Grande Rev.*, Feb. 15, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> J. du Tillet, *Rev. Bleue*, Mar. 3, 1894. To be sure, Jules Lemaître's *Le Député Leveau* had been produced in 1890, but that is chiefly a satire on the political activity of General Boulanger, who committed suicide at Brussels in 1891.

<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere Brioux attacks both universal suffrage, which he terms "the god and tyrant of the magistracy" (*La Robe Rouge*, i, 6), and its "five hundred so-called representatives at the end of the Bridge" (*Les Avariés*, iii, 2), who have come to believe that their sole business is to make and overthrow ministries" (*Les Remplaçantes*, ii, 9).

into the hands of the unscrupulous?<sup>1</sup> That is evidently the opinion of Maurice Spronck, who asserts that at present political candidacy founded on conviction is extremely rare.<sup>2</sup> Octave Mirbeau is even more severe. In *Les 21 Jours d'un Neurasthénique* he says: "That candidate will certainly be elected who during the campaign has promised most, even though his party and his principles be diametrically opposed to those of his constituents." Nor is Mirbeau's opinion of politicians and politics more favourable.<sup>3</sup> This avowed partisan of parliamentary government has produced in *Le Foyer* (1908)—a drama in which a politician, implicated in a scandal, saves himself through the amours of his wife—what one critic calls the most insulting charge ever brought against French legislators.<sup>4</sup>

Flaubert, unlike Mirbeau, preferred ridicule to violent denunciation. In *Le Candidat* (1874), he saw only the stupidity of his characters. Their

<sup>1</sup> "In France," writes J. E. Bodley, "if a politician display the essential qualities of a party-leader and a capacity to impose his will upon his followers, the cry of Dictator is raised. Thus, whatever the system of election, the candidature of those who represent the best elements of the nation is not encouraged." *France*, ii, 176.

<sup>2</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Mar. 14, 1899.

<sup>3</sup> "Mais allez donc," he says in *Les Mauvais Bergers* (1898), "émouvoir cet être sans visage qu'on appelle un politicien! Allez donc tuer cette chose qu'on appelle la politique! . . . cette chose abominable, par quoi tout a été avili, tout corrompu, tout acheté, tout vendu."

<sup>4</sup> J. Lux, *Rev. Bleue*, Feb. 13, 1909.

prattle is too naïve and colourless to be called intrigue. The bourgeois "candidate" buys off three supposed opponents, whose sole object, in reality, is to obtain the hand of his daughter. Blinded by vanity, Rousselin becomes now a republican, now a conservative, then a protectionist, and finally a free-trader.<sup>1</sup> After 1870, perhaps influenced by Renan, Flaubert conceived a violent dislike for "ignorant, sentimental democracy." And inasmuch as the great mass of mankind is destined ever to occupy an inferior intellectual rank, he, like Renan, desired the domination of a "legitimate aristocracy" composed of savants.<sup>2</sup>

Jules Lemaître, in *Le Député Leveau* (1890), created a deputy who, though less stupid than Flaubert's Rousselin, is gloriously duped, nevertheless. Himself a radical, he works for the election of a marquis, in the hope that the marquis's wife will obtain a divorce and marry him. In the capital scene (III, 2), the Marquise induces Leveau to sanction all the conservative principles she proposes for a political manifesto. This dupe is a parvenu whom political ambition leads to neglect his wife and so profoundly affects his home life.

Similar features are prominent in *La Crise*

<sup>1</sup> Flaubert's sense of humour lacks proportion. His Rousselin has something in common with Levrault, Jules Sandeau's "candidate" in *Sacs et Parchemins* (1851).

<sup>2</sup> L. Lévy-Bruhl, "Flaubert Philosophe," *Rev. de Paris*, Feb. 15, 1900.

(*The Crisis*, 1895), a political comedy by Maurice Boniface. Bernier, a parvenu aspirant for the office of prime minister, demands a divorce from his wife (to whom and whose dowry he owes everything), because she has a lover, his intimate colleague. When the wife threatens to expose his own amours, Bernier decides to bury the matter and accept the premiership. Boniface's satire varies with his mood as he develops the character of his politician. Now playful humour, now grim irony, it next assumes the form of contempt, then reacts toward ridicule.

With humour, ridicule, and contempt, Maurice Barrès mingles indignation and anger. In *Une Journée Parlementaire* (1894), it is a question of bribery and the extortion of hush money. Legislators and the press that exposes them are equally contemptible. Barrès's comedy is a lampoon rather than a work of art, but it indicates admirably the charged state of the political atmosphere.

In *La Proie* (*The Prey*, 1897), Henry Bérenger strikes a more philosophic note. He wishes to condemn positivism in politics, that is, opportunism. This attitude is entirely consistent with the ideas which he developed in an earlier work, *L'Aristocratie Intellectuelle* (1895), where he shows the superiority of broadminded statesmanship over a policy of temporary expedients. Rozel, the hero of *La Proie*, illustrates his point of view. If this brilliant young deputy had looked far

ahead, instead of striving after immediate success, he might have had a great political career and enjoyed domestic happiness. But he marries a woman above his rank and so as a *déclassé* falls a "prey" to his short-sighted ambition. Likewise, as we infer, it is owing to their lack of lofty purpose and strong conviction that many members of Parliament favour a policy of makeshifts.

Philosophic, again, and even more obscure than *La Proie*, is M. de Vogüé's political novel, *Les Morts Qui Parlent* (*The Dead Who Speak*, 1899). The author asserts that the more we repudiate traditions, the louder they cry for vindication. We think that we are treading on the inert ashes of the dead, but in reality the dead envelop and oppress us; we are stifled under their weight; they are in our bones, in our blood, in the grey matter of our brain. In depicting the chief phases of parliamentary life—an electoral campaign, a debate in the Chamber, the overthrow of a ministry,<sup>1</sup> and the election of a president of the French Republic—this novel shows several points of resemblance with *L'Engrenage*.<sup>2</sup>

Another work whose general plot has much in common with Brieux's play is *La Poigne* (*The Fist*, 1902), a drama by Jean Jullien. The hero regrets having left his provincial town for political life. The central theme, however, is rather

<sup>1</sup> It is in Chapter XV that the Panama investigation is described.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. notes, pages 147, 148 of this Chapter.



bureaucracy and ministerial tyranny—evils which, Jullien implies, are largely due to the present parliamentary system.

Léon Daudet, in *Le Pays des Parlementeurs* (*The Country of the Parliamentary Wranglers*, 1901),<sup>1</sup> denounces this system much more violently. He sees France in the clutches of the Freemasons and the Jews, who, he asserts, wage implacable war on the army, religion, and tradition.<sup>2</sup> Daudet has a brilliant imagination, but the caustic tone of his novel destroys its literary value.

*Leurs Figures* (*Their Faces*, 1902), by Maurice Barrès, suffers from the same defect.<sup>3</sup> It is a novel on the Panama scandal, in which over a hundred members of Parliament were accused of accepting bribes.<sup>4</sup> Barrès does not mince matters. His accusations sound too plausible to be dismissed as fiction. Indeed Paul Flat calls the work "a bronze tablet with its political

<sup>1</sup> Note the contempt implied in the form "parlementeur."

<sup>2</sup> Of the same opinion are E. Drumont, A. Séché, and H. Vaugeois. Séché declares that religion, the army, property, the family—all the vital forces of France—are methodically attacked by "the enemy of the interior," the four confederated Estates: Jews, Protestants, Freemasons, and *métèques*.

<sup>3</sup> J. Ernest-Charles, after remarking that there are two kinds of impartiality: the impartiality of the friend and the impartiality of the adversary, observes that Barrès's attitude in this novel is of the latter kind.

<sup>4</sup> The title is explained by the following passage: "*Leurs figures, qu'ils veulent faire sereines, trahissent leurs battements de cœur*" (p. 25).

inscription carved in broad outline for all time."<sup>1</sup>

Julien Lefèvre's *Robert Perceval* (1900) is much more sympathetic towards the idea of political equality than any of the works just summarized. Deputy, minister, premier, the hero, Perceval, everywhere resists political corruption. He reasons with his electors in intimate talks, notwithstanding the opinion of a campaign expert, who asserts that an election is merely a matter of organization and funds.<sup>2</sup> Perceval demonstrates that "democracy is not ungrateful to those who serve it loyally."<sup>3</sup> In short, Lefèvre thinks that universal suffrage would be quite right if candidates knew how to proceed. To my knowledge he is the only recent French man of letters who takes this view.

Other political works might be added, but those already mentioned leave no doubt about the consensus of literary opinion in France regarding parliamentary government and universal suffrage. Indeed with the mass of recent characterizations,

<sup>1</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Feb. 15, 1913. Similarly H. Brémond, after hailing *Leurs Figures* as a masterpiece, and denying that the work is in any sense a political pamphlet, says that it would be regrettable for posterity to regard Maurice Barrès as the Paul-Louis Courier of the Third Republic. Rather does he liken him to Saint-Simon. *Vingt-cinq Années de Vie Littér.*, p. lii.

<sup>2</sup> Page 80. "The candidate desirous of succeeding," says Maurice Spronck, "will take for granted now that with a very few honourable exceptions the voter's ballot is for sale."

<sup>3</sup> Page 99. The successful candidate in *Vouloir* (1913), a comedy by G. Guiches, follows the persuasive method.

the only difficulty is *l'embarras du choix*. One writer, in his wrath, would "sweep out the parliamentary vermin" and have done with the "ignoble parliamentary deliquescence."<sup>1</sup> Another wonders whether his compatriots are at last beginning to realize the "dupery of universal suffrage,"<sup>2</sup> which, still another says, "lowers and levels everything it touches."<sup>3</sup> And as recently as 1914 we read in André Lichtenberger's novel, *Le Sang Nouveau*: "Perhaps France is today as tired of a parliamentary republic as of the traditional monarchy; as weary of universal suffrage as of an hereditary aristocracy."<sup>4</sup>

In a word, the same note is heard generally, both in literature and in the press. Legislators are everywhere covered with ridicule and scorn; everywhere held in contempt and accused of hypocrisy; everywhere despised for their selfishness, their mediocrity, and their incompetency.<sup>5</sup> Émile

<sup>1</sup> G. Deherme, *La Crise Sociale*, pp. 7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> A. Capus, *Figaro*, Sept. 9, 1912.

<sup>3</sup> C. Benoist, "Le Pouvoir Judiciaire dans la Démocratie," *Deux Mondes*, Oct. 15, 1899.

<sup>4</sup> "For the first time in France since the Encyclopædists began to undermine the Old Monarchy," declares J. E. Bodley, "no one has a substitute to propose for the existing régime."

<sup>5</sup> In *Paroles Sincères*, Coppée says:

"Voyons: dans mon quartier qui sera député?

"Cet avocat véreux? Ce médecin raté?

"Quand j'y songe, le choix me paraît difficile;

"L'un est une canaille et l'autre un imbécile."

Nor does a French legislator who chances to open a volume of Forain's caricatures find a more flattering portrait of himself.

Faguet, in a convincing arraignment of French political life, comes to the conclusion that democracy practises the cult of incompetency, since the levelling *esprit égalitaire* is opposed to talent. Hence the success of unworthy politicians, hence the incompetency of legislators, ministers, magistrates, and functionaries.<sup>1</sup> In a certain sense, Faguet is here a disciple of Nietzsche, whose vogue in France, according to Édouard Schuré, was due largely to the lassitude resulting from egalitarian democracy. "People had noticed," he writes, "how much it diminishes and disfigures man."<sup>2</sup> Nobody was more firmly convinced of the truth of this assertion than Renan, who, after Taine, exercised the greatest influence on French philosophic and literary thought from

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Forain represents deputies as "grands phraseurs," "grands prometteurs," "grands batailleurs," but completely at the mercy of ministerial favour in the form of a decoration or a tobacco license. (Cf. esp. *Doux Pays*, pp. 20, 153.) As early as 1863, the Goncourts spoke of the "phrases menteuses," the "mots sonores," and the "blagues" of the politicians of their time. (*Journal*, Jan. 29, 1863. Cf. same, May 24, 1887.) The best example of the *miles gloriosus* type in the recent drama is Des Moulinards in Lavedan's *Les Deux Noblesses*.

<sup>1</sup> *Culte de l'Incompétence* (1910). P. de Coubertin, a partisan of universal suffrage, argues, though not very convincingly, that it has "proved trustworthy and wise." *France since 1814*, p. 264.

<sup>2</sup> "Nietzsche en France," *Rev. Bleue*, Sept. 8, 1900. Nietzsche, after ridiculing the idea of equality, exclaims: "Equality for the equal, inequality for the unequal, is the only rational conception of true justice." A. Fouillée, "Les Idées Soc. de Nietzsche," *Deux Mondes*, May 15, 1902.



1860 to 1880. Renan early declared that he would never recognize the sovereignty of "*la déraison*."<sup>1</sup> Then the plebiscite following the Coup d'État of 1851 and his own failure of election completely disgusted him with the "blind, ignorant" masses, whose stupidity long remained a target for his satire.<sup>2</sup> For years he emphatically favoured "an hereditary aristocracy and a dynasty in which are incarnated the genius and interests of the nation."<sup>3</sup> And subsequently he indorsed universal suffrage half-heartedly only on the express condition that the *peuple* be educated and enlightened.<sup>4</sup>

As for Taine, who at the age of twenty-one declared himself incapable of voting, because he was not sufficiently acquainted with France, her ideas, her customs, her future,—an eminent critic says: "Egalitarian, levelling democracy always had in him an instinctive enemy."<sup>5</sup> Balzac

<sup>1</sup> *Avenir de la Science*, p. 342. Ibsen, it will be remembered, wrote *An Enemy of the People* to show that "the majority is never right." Herbert Spencer would say that "majorities are usually wrong." Cf. *Soc. Statics*, ed. 1865, pp. 232-234.

<sup>2</sup> As late as 1885 he represents two "citizens" whose mania for equality goes so far as to demand that "privileges" like virtue and charity be taxed. *Le Prêtre de Nemi*, i, 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Réforme Intellectuelle et Morale*, p. 251.

<sup>4</sup> "The antinomy of Renan's compact," declares M. de Vogüé, "will astonish posterity." (*Heures d'Hist.*, p. 298.) Le Play, writing in the last year of the Second Empire, exclaims: "Mais qui contrôlera le peuple entier poussé au désordre et à la vénalité par l'abus du droit de suffrage?" *L'Organisation du Travail*, p. 224.

<sup>5</sup> V. Giraud, *Deux Mondes*, Feb. 1, 1908.



and Flaubert represented essentially this same tendency.

If, then, we recall the conditions described in this chapter—conditions tending to create dissatisfaction and favour animated discussion—it is not surprising that, as D. Parodi asserts, the idea of democracy in general, and the principle of equality in particular, should be passing through a crisis at the present time.<sup>1</sup> No other principles, according to this social writer, are so contested today among French philosophers and men of letters.<sup>2</sup> And the untenable position, in these discussions, of those who would base the principle of political equality on the supposed requests embodied in the famous *Cahiers* of 1789, may be inferred from the attitude of Émile Faguet who, after reading what he calls the first exhaustive work on the subject,<sup>3</sup> comes to the emphatic conclusion that the *Cahiers* did not ask for political equality at all.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever may be the merits and disadvantages of universal suffrage and parliamentary government, good is bound to result from a vigorous

<sup>1</sup> *Traditionalisme et Démocratie* (1909), p. 309. Raymond Poincaré, however, thinks that universal suffrage is not in danger. In *How France Is Governed*, p. 139, he says: "No one today would think of abolishing it."

<sup>2</sup> Robert Vallery-Radot, a grandson of Pasteur, speaks of "le nombre imbécile et triomphant" in his recent novel, *L'Homme de Désir*.

<sup>3</sup> Edme Champion, *La France d'après les Cahiers de 1789*.

<sup>4</sup> *Quest. Pol.*, p. 9.

presentation of their shortcomings.<sup>1</sup> Lectures, critical articles, and novels are valuable instruments for arousing public interest; but a drama like *L'Engrenage* or *La Vie Publique* makes a more powerful appeal to the conscience. And in such questions much depends on the public conscience. For the cause of reform may be gloomy and well-nigh hopeless, yet, to quote Frédéric Loliée:

There is no social malady which does not allow of a partial cure, at least. It is not useless, it is necessary, on the contrary, to struggle against falsehood and fraud by the protests of the writer and the dramatist. . . . Public opinion must be kept warned against them. If the results are not immediately discernible, literature none the less exercises a wholesome influence by its firm and clear-sighted satire of manners.<sup>2</sup>

To be sure, men are not reformed by criticism; nevertheless, were it not for censors and critics, they would probably be worse, as La Bruyère used to say. That is why people preach and write.<sup>3</sup>

The salutary influence of the political play which, as we have seen, is a comparatively recent form of the drama, can be greatly extended. Even

<sup>1</sup> J. E. Bodley, in his admirable study, *France* (1898), comes to the conclusion that "the root of the evil is to be found not in its republican form . . . but in the parliamentary system."

<sup>2</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Mar. 8, 1902.

<sup>3</sup> E. Faguet, *Flaubert*, p. 190.

if the growing political power of women and the results of the European war change French politics immensely, as they are likely to do, there will still remain cause for political plays.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As early as 1900 Émile Faguet foresaw the importance of the rôle that feminism was destined to play in French politics. The influence of women, he thinks, will be conservative, for morality, and opposed to alcoholic drinks. Cf. his *Problèmes Pol. du Temps Présent* (1900) and "La Fin de 'la Fronde'" (a feminist journal), *Rev. Bleue*, Sept. 19, 1903. ✓

## CHAPTER VII

### CHARITY, PHILANTHROPY, INDUSTRIAL BENEFICENCE

*Les Bienfaiteurs* (Brioux)—*Le Repas du Lion* (Curel)—*Les Mauvais Bergers* (Mirbeau)—*Charité* (Gleize)—*La Barricade* (Bourget)—*L'Impérieuse Bonté* (Rosny)—*Les Charitables* (Quet).

IN Brioux's next play, *Les Bienfaiteurs*, produced two years after *L'Engrenage*, he deals with a subject no less characteristically French than excessive political activity, but one, in spite of its abuses, pleasanter to contemplate—that is, charity, the efforts of the more fortunate in society to help the less fortunate. Such efforts of course are nothing new; the generosity and humanity of the French people have long been proverbial, though their Saint Vincents de Paul have never been numerous. Under the Old Régime, the religious orders cultivated a wholesome spirit of mercy.<sup>1</sup> But notwithstanding such benevolent ministrations, the public authorities were constantly preoccupied (at times, indeed, their con-

<sup>1</sup> The leaders of the Reformation, if not indifferent to charitable work, stressed the necessity of it much less than did the Catholics.

cern verged on terror) by the threatening aspect of mendicancy and vagabondage,<sup>1</sup> which the severest measures could not suppress, owing to famine and pestilence. Léon Lallemand, in his *Histoire de la Charité*, devotes many pages to this phase of the question.<sup>2</sup> Although more than once chronic beggars had been sentenced to the galleys,<sup>3</sup> the problem was still, on the eve of the Revolution, as vexing as ever, as is attested by the *Cahiers* of 1789.<sup>4</sup> The decline of religious faith, in the eighteenth century, had naturally led to indifference, or at least a flagging of zeal, among many charity workers, but this loss was compensated for in part by the rise of humanitarian philosophy. At the same time developed the tearful comedy and the bourgeois tragedy. These influences and Rousseau's theory of man's innate *bonté* reappear in the nineteenth century in the general form of humanitarianism. The movement in favour of social solidarity, which came to

<sup>1</sup> A. Desjardins, *Les Cahiers des États Gén.*, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> The following topic-headings in vol. iv speak for themselves: *Les Peines corporelles appliquées aux mendiants* (p. 175); *De la Prison à la transportation, en passant par l'esclavage et les galères* (p. 183); *Les Mendiants et vagabonds condamnés aux galères* (p. 187); *Condamnation à mort pour fait de mendicité* (p. 195); *Défense de loger les gens sans aveu et de faire publiquement l'aumône* (p. 207).

<sup>3</sup> L. Lallemand, ref. quoted, iv, 188.

<sup>4</sup> A. Desjardins, *Les Cahiers des États Gén.*, p. xxxviii. As late as 1764 a decree against vagabonds threatened the men with sentence to the galleys, the women, with imprisonment. *Ibid.*, p. 142.



a spectacular climax in 1848, was revived with great vigour during the pessimism of the Seventies and Eighties, thanks to the charitable doctrine of positivism and to Russian influence.<sup>1</sup>

The general attitude of French authors of the nineteenth century was favourable to humanitarianism. Victor Hugo and Michelet, more than any others, contributed to the development of a sense of pity. Michelet's vivid descriptions of the appalling suffering of past centuries are equalled only by Hugo's persuasive exhortations for mercy in prose and verse. All his life Balzac dreamed vaguely of a work like *Les Misérables*, but he was not able to crystallize his conception, because for such a creation he lacked the necessary spirit of compassion.<sup>2</sup> More truly sympathetic were Lamartine and George Sand, who continued the Rousseau tradition. And Vigny's stand against the cruelty of industrial oppression in *Chatterton* shows that, notwithstanding his disdainful reserve,

<sup>1</sup> It has been held, however, that the Slav doctrine was merely a transformation of earlier French ideas. André Maurel, commenting on the Russian apostle, says: "The direct source of Tolstoy's doctrine is France. 1848 experienced similar sentimental excesses. If the author of *My Religion* seems new to us, it is because we have forgotten our contemporary intellectual history." "La Religion de la Souffrance Humaine," *Rev. Bleue*, July 5, 1890.

<sup>2</sup> A. Le Breton, *Balzac*, p. 277. This is attested by Balzac's attitude in such works as *Les Paysans*, *Le Curé de Village*, and *L'Interdiction*. Le Breton even charges him with anathematizing the philanthropists for "compromising the social order by pleading the cause of the humble." *Ibid.*, p. 132.

he pleads for more than the cause of genius.<sup>1</sup> The charitable zeal of a Lamennais, a Lacordaire, a Dupanloup, finds a worthy counterpart in the *bonté* of an Augustin Cochin, a Comte, and a Littré.<sup>2</sup> Even the aristocratic Renan himself felt a deep and sincere compassion for the lowly, though his refusal to compromise his high ideals of the future for the benefit of the present sometimes made him seem unsympathetic.<sup>3</sup>

There have always been a few to wonder whether the humanitarianism of the nineteenth century was altogether wise. Are charity, benevolence, philanthropy justifiable in principle? To most persons this question sounds absurd. In others it arouses indignation and calls forth protest, on account of the implied negation of Christian mercy and solidarity. Nevertheless, a philosophy based on the principle of natural selection and the survival of the fittest is apt to answer in the negative. Darwin, perhaps, does not

<sup>1</sup> After Vigny's disillusion, his thoughts turned toward the humble and the resigned. M. Paléologue, *Alfred de Vigny*, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> "Live for others," says M. Lévy-Bruhl, "is the supreme formula of the positivist moral code." ("La Morale Soc. d'Auguste Comte," *Rev. Bleue*, Jan. 20, 1900.) Renan tells us that "Littré n'aima que la bonté. . . . Il se plaisait avec le peuple." *Rép. au Disc. de Pasteur*.

<sup>3</sup> In this respect, Flaubert was a reactionary. As is evident from *L'Éducation Sentimentale*, he regretted the ascendancy of the influence of Rousseau over that of Voltaire. He accused socialism and humanitarianism of being guided by sentiment rather than by scientific truth, hence his satiric stress on such ideas as fraternity and equality.

go so far, at least in practical ethics. But take Nietzsche, Herbert Spencer, and, we might almost add, Ibsen. "We know," says Alfred Fouillée, "with what vehemence Nietzsche condemns not only justice, but pity, charity, and benevolence, as well."<sup>1</sup> In essentially the same spirit Spencer writes: "Measures which prevent the dwindling away of inferior individuals or families, must, in the course of generations, cause the nation at large to dwindle away."<sup>2</sup> And elsewhere: "We must call those spurious philanthropists, who, to prevent present misery, would entail greater misery upon future generations."<sup>3</sup>

Rarely have such sentiments been expressed by French authors. To my knowledge no prominent French man of letters, except Zola and Octave Mirbeau, has condemned charity and philanthropy in principle, though numerous writers in France are opposed to them in their present form. Maurice Spronck asserts that charity is so centralized, so immobilized by bureaucratic administrative rules, that its efficiency is reduced to insignificance.<sup>4</sup> Private charity, he

<sup>1</sup> "Les Idées Soc. de Nietzsche," *Deux Mondes*, May 15, 1902.

<sup>2</sup> *Prin. of Ethics*, vol. i, p. iii, ch. ix.

<sup>3</sup> *Soc. Statics*, ed. 1865, p. 353. J.-H. Rosny refuses to accept the biological objection to charity, for the reason that the weakness of today may become the strength of tomorrow. *L'Impérieuse Bonté*, ch. ii.

<sup>4</sup> "Le personnel de l'Assistance publique, qui s'est accru de 7000 employés nouveaux en dix ans, coûte 26 millions de francs, soit les deux tiers de l'énorme budget de la charité officielle. Ainsi, sur 100 francs donnés pour les pauvres, il leur en revient à peine 35." G. Deherme, *La Crise Sociale* (1910), p. 154.

declares, is so split up, so utterly without system, that it is bestowed haphazard and to no purpose. Consequently, notwithstanding the immense funds that Paris alone expends on her unfortunates, professional beggars fare well, whereas the deserving suffer and die of hunger, because they do not know where to apply.<sup>1</sup> Édouard Fuster, while deploring the tendency to exaggerate the so-called dupery of charity, admits that "public relief at present is inadequate, badly organized, and sometimes harmful."<sup>2</sup> Paul Straus, an eminent authority on the subject, condemns in the strongest terms what he calls "promiscuous charity."<sup>3</sup> Zola, finally, in his novels *L'Argent* (1891)<sup>4</sup> and *Paris* (1897),<sup>5</sup> proclaims the "bankruptcy" of charity and the necessity of "social justice."<sup>6</sup> From Zola's standpoint to the suppression of charity as demanded by Octave Mirbeau,<sup>7</sup> there is but a step.

<sup>1</sup> "L'Assistance Publique," *Rev. Bleue*, Feb. 2, 1895. M. Spronck's conclusions are based in part on *Paris Qui Mendie*, a convincing work on false mendicants by Louis Paulian, which, owing to its philosophical and literary merit, has been called the most amusing picaresque document of the nineteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Feb. 23, 1895.

<sup>3</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Mar. 17, 1894. Cf. the same journal for Feb. 10, 1894.

<sup>4</sup> Ch. i.

<sup>5</sup> Ed., 1905, pp. 10, 108, 409, 410.

<sup>6</sup> In *L'Argent*, Zola says of Sigismond, his social theorist: "The idea of charity . . . angered him. . . . He admitted only justice." René Bazin, on the other hand, enumerates a series of Catholic initiatives in labour legislation, so refuting the charge of "bankruptcy." *Questions Littér. et. Soc.*, p. 291.

<sup>7</sup> *Le Foyer* (1908), ii, 8.



Suppression in the name of social justice is the present slogan. This means that, were society what it should be, no labourer would ever need charity. It is this attitude that gives the question its serious, not to say threatening, aspect and explains why so many authors have presented it in the form of an industrial conflict terminating in a labour strike.<sup>1</sup> But a problem of such proportions and complexity as that of charity requires something more than a vague phrase like "social justice." Until an economic and social millennium cures the ills of mankind, the indigent will need aid. For the present the question is, how to reach them effectively.

A number of dramatists and novelists have expressed their views on the subject. For the most part these writers have either contented themselves with a denunciation of existing abuses or have attempted to show that a solution must be sought in the industrial question. Others maintain that the industrial question is in reality a moral and religious question.<sup>2</sup> In the drama, the theme has been treated by Brieux, Curel, Mirbeau, Lucien Gleize, Bourget, and Henry Kistemaekers. Novels on the subject have been produced by J.-H. Rosny, Édouard Quet, and,

<sup>1</sup> "La grève générale, c'est la tarte à la crème de tous les révolutionnaires, c'est sur elle qu'ils comptent pour forcer la bourgeoisie à mettre les pouces et accepter leur loi." L. de Seilhac, *Rev. Bleue*, Oct. 22, 1898.

<sup>2</sup> The first writer to formulate this idea was Lacordaire. Cf. Comte d'Haussonville, *Lacordaire*, 4th ed., p. 152.



in a more general sense by Zola<sup>1</sup> and René Bazin.<sup>2</sup>

*Les Bienfaiteurs* (*The Benefactors*), Brieux's four-act play, was represented in 1896 at the Porte Saint-Martin Theatre. It shows the utter failure of a woman's attempt at organized charity, while her husband succeeds no better as a philanthropic industrial employer.

The first act takes place at the home of Landrecy, a factory foreman. Landrecy, his wife, Pauline, and her cousin, Georgette, are thought insane by their neighbours, because they give everything to the poor.<sup>3</sup> Landrecy, having resigned his position as a protest against the dismissal of a workman by their employer, contemplates establishing a factory on humanitarian principles if he can find the necessary capital. He would share profits with his men, pay each according to the size of his family, and develop their sense of dignity.

Fortune smiles on the Landrecy projects. Pauline's brother, Valentin Salviat, from whom

<sup>1</sup> *Germinal*. Cf. ed. 1900, pp. 190, 320.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Blé Qui Lève* (1907). Cf. pp. 76, 109.

<sup>3</sup> Vauvenargues says somewhere that generosity suffers from the ills of others as if it were responsible. Henry Bordeaux, however, attributes the charity of some people to other motives: "La misère est pénible à regarder. . . . On accepte même d'être généreux, mais par intermédiaire, afin de n'être pas incommodé par de fâcheux spectacles." According to La Bruyère, "donner, c'est agir, ce n'est pas souffrir de ses bienfaits, ni céder à l'importunité de ceux qui nous demandent."

she has received no news for many years, unexpectedly returns as the gold king of Africa. Although skeptical, Valentin, partly to please Georgette, with whom he falls in love, places at Landrecy's disposal all the money he needs and makes it possible for Pauline to bestow charity on a princely scale. To be sure, he denies the efficacy of organized charity,<sup>1</sup> recalls from his own beggar days the insolence and brutality of the officials in charge of public charity, and speaks of the insignificant results obtained by religious organizations. But Pauline will aim at moral regeneration, reclaim convicts, and uplift the fallen. Indeed she is already practising these principles by refusing to dismiss Clara, a servant who is so untidy and rude that she could not find a place elsewhere. Landrecy is equally enthusiastic: "You will see whether workmen are grateful when one understands how to treat them."

The second act opens a year later in a large hall fitted out as a charity-office and assembly-room. Valentin, having absented himself for a year in the vain hope of forgetting his love for Georgette, who is engaged to Henri, a civil engineer, now returns. In discussing their industrial experiment, Landrecy tells Valentin that while he has been obliged to dismiss certain "black sheep" and employ an energetic foreman, his factory is

<sup>1</sup> Tocqueville remarks that public charity gives rise to abuses, whatever be the system employed. *L'Ancien Rég. et la Rév.*, p. 386.

now well organized. The workmen receive free medical service; they have a store that sells at cost, a day-nursery, and apprenticeship schools. After a certain number of years, the model dwellings become their property. The wage-scale, graduated according to the size of the family, has not, however, been a success, so that Landrecy now employs only unmarried men, or "reasonable" married men.

Compelled to give up individual charity, owing to the impossibility of personally investigating the case of each mendicant, Pauline has consolidated several organizations under one system. She wishes to exhibit, at a general meeting of the various branch-organizations to be attended by Valentin, as many "regenerated" specimens as possible. The most noteworthy are Féchain, a drunkard-beggar, Clara (Pauline's former maid, who has gone wrong), and a reclaimed criminal. By exploiting the *Œuvre des Filles-Mères*, Clara lives comfortably without work, whereas Pauline allows a widow with legitimate children only a few sous for honest labour.

The general meeting is a spectacle for gods and men. During the reading of the report, the women, in their elegant gowns, discuss politics, social events, and fashion. The most striking feature of the organization is the jealousy and lack of co-operation among the fashionable patronesses. For instance, the urgent appeal of a mother in despair, not having been addressed

to the proper office, has remained unanswered, so driving the woman to infanticide and suicide. After a heated discussion, the dainty charity-workers decide to burn the unfortunate mother's letter solemnly in the fireplace as the only means of easing their remorse. During the dispute over this incident, Valentin Salviat enters. But he immediately goes out in disgust.

In Act III we are back at Landrecy's house. Féchain, almost too drunk to walk, starts to sing his cut-and-dried song: "A father of five children . . ." etc., but Valentin makes him tell the facts. He is really not Féchain at all, but is living with a woman, it appears, whose husband, Féchain, is in prison. By using the real Féchain's legal papers, our "indigent" has been swindling Pauline's organization. In order to teach Pauline how to guard against such swindles, Escaudin, an expert official, gives a specimen lesson in the art of despatching beggars. The applicants, brought in one at a time, are intimidated by sharp routine questions. His heartlessness angers Valentin so much that Pauline is obliged to ask the expert to leave. Indignant at such contemptible cynicism, Valentin tells his sister to send each of these beggars a hundred francs, and to let herself be swindled a thousand times by impostors rather than to run the risk of inflicting such humiliation upon one single deserving mendicant.

During Landrecy's absence, a deputation of workmen come to demand that he reinstate one



of their comrades, Lecourcheux. Pauline and her staff, seizing the opportunity to show true Christian charity, offer the men wine. They think that such condescension goes a long way toward solving the social problem, but in clinking glasses, the delicate *présidentes* keep at a safe distance, as if the workmen were lepers. One of the deputation mutters: "Let them keep their charity and give us justice!"

In the final act the demand of the deputation is double: "Lecourcheux must be reinstated" and "Every man has a right to employment."<sup>1</sup> Landrecy accepts the principle that everyone has a right to the kind of labour he is capable of doing, but Lecourcheux, he makes them admit, does not know his trade. Nevertheless, the strikers, trusting in the boastful promises of their socialist deputies, refuse to listen to reason. Every time that Landrecy makes them a proposition, they say that, before reaching a decision, they must discuss the matter freely by themselves, ostensibly in order to preserve the sacred rights of labour. But when given an opportunity to "deliberate free from restraint," they find that they have no case. Landrecy reminds them of what he has done for them in the way of medical

<sup>1</sup> Early in the February Revolution, Lamartine was prevailed upon to proclaim "the right to employment." Scherer declares that "the right to employment" is simply the right of the poor to live at the expense of the rich. *La Démocratie et la France*, p. 69.



attendance, schools, dwellings, etc., but they readily find a motive back of each benefaction.<sup>1</sup> Finally, they object to the way in which benefactors proceed: "When you give something, you give it with a pair of pincers." They think that the manner of giving matters more than what one gives.<sup>2</sup>

Landrecy and Pauline are profoundly discouraged. They realize the truth of what Valentin has said about the "impenetrable wall between employer and workman."<sup>3</sup> The millionaire, while not questioning his sister's good intentions, declares that her charity has done more harm than good. Nevertheless, he would gladly subscribe another huge sum to Pauline's fund, if Georgette would break her engagement to Henri and marry him. When, however, the young woman offers to make this sacrifice for charity, he chivalrously refuses to accept it. In the

<sup>1</sup> These tactics received their classical expression in Sardou's *Rabagas*, where the Prince tells Eva how all his acts are distorted and misconstrued: I go walking: *J'ai bien des loisirs*.—I do not go walking: *J'ai peur de me montrer*.—I give a ball: *Luxe effréné*.—No ball: *Quelle avarice!*—Fireworks on my birthday: *L'argent du peuple en fumée!*—No fireworks: *Rien pour les plaisirs du peuple*.—I am well: *La débauché!*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Le Menteur* (i, 1):

"Tel donne à pleines mains qui n'oblige personne;

"La façon de donner vaut mieux que ce qu'on donne."

<sup>3</sup> Tolstoy takes essentially the same view: "I became persuaded that between us rich men and the poor there stood erected by ourselves a barrier of cleanliness and education which arose out of our wealth, and that, in order to be able to help them, we must first break down this barrier." *What Is to Be Done?* ch. xiv.

final scene, Landrecy discovers that sympathy avails more with his workmen than a banknote. This only confirms the theory of Valentin, the author's representative, that "with alms one must give a handshake."<sup>1</sup>

Brieux evidently means that in our philanthropic attempts to bring the classes together, we lack the true spirit of brotherhood. His satire on fashionable charity shows that

at the bottom of these so-called charitable works there is vanity, the love of appearance, the need of meeting and chattering and giving oneself the illusion of accomplishing something; there isn't an atom of genuine charity. So it happens that idleness is encouraged and imposture rewarded, while suffering is not alleviated in the least.<sup>2</sup>

While Act II is the strongest in its satire, the play is almost uniformly good in the interspersed satirically humorous episodes. These not only advance the action but combine comic effect with didactic purpose in such a way that each serves appreciably to strengthen the thesis. One could scarcely desire more convincing proof

<sup>1</sup> "C'est par le cœur qu'on touche le prolétaire, dont le génie, annihilé aujourd'hui, émane du cœur. Les bourgeois ne savent qu'étaler leur sécheresse, leur morgue et leur féroce égoïsme." G. Deherme.

<sup>2</sup> R. Doumic, *Deux Mondes*, Jan. 15, 1899. Balzac, satirizing the vanity of charity, says: "La mode était alors chez les femmes à une effronterie de bonnes actions qui passait toutes bornes." *Le Député d'Arcis*.

of the harmful effects of organized charity than the swindle practised by a drunkard like Féchain or the ruses of Clara, while the deserving poor are driven to despair by neglect.<sup>1</sup>

Three episodes deserve special mention for their originality and clever execution. The first (Act II) is the burning of the fatal letter at the general meeting, in order to obliterate all evidence of guilt on the part of the patronesses in ignoring the distressed mother's appeal.<sup>2</sup> The second is Escaudin's specimen lesson in the despatch of mendicants (Act III). This equals in excellence Molière's famous tailor scene between Don Juan and M. Dimanche. Finally, the dainty patronesses clinking their glasses with the workmen (Act III) forms a scene of rare conception and execution. It is such features that stamp a literary work with individuality. Less original, but even superior in execution, is the deliberation "free from intimidating restraint" in the last act. Nothing could be more lifelike. Nothing could show better the illusions, shortsightedness, and prejudices of strikers. Brioux's conception of the working class, as he shows again in *Résultat des Courses*, bears evidence of a psychological penetration not possessed by any other dramatist of our time.

<sup>1</sup> In *La Petite Amie* (iii, 1), Brioux represents charity as the dupe of a vagabond.

<sup>2</sup> Similarly, in *Le Foyer* (Mirbeau) and *Les Charitables* (Quet) the "benefactors" dread scandal.

Balancing these excellences there are, unfortunately, two conspicuous faults: the superficiality of the characters and the insipid love intrigue. The latter has no purpose except to explain Valentin's interest in the charitable experiments of his sister and brother-in-law. Georgette's fiancé disappears early in the first act, and she herself appears only just often enough not to be forgotten. Valentin's love for her and his withdrawal in favour of Henri do not add the slightest interest to the play. He is one of those characters who are always exceptional.<sup>1</sup> It may be said, indeed, that all the chief characters lack depth and consistency. We have no conception of Landrecy. Nor do we understand Pauline much better. Féchain, Clara, Escaudin, and the deputation of workmen are excellent, but they play only minor rôles.

Dramatically, at least, Brioux makes both of his points: organized charity, as he describes it, deserves condemnation; and a patronizing industrial employer may expect only ingratitude from his employés, unless he shows them personal sympathy.<sup>2</sup> These points are enough to justify

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Samson* (Bernstein) and *L'Aventurier* (Capus).

<sup>2</sup> Brioux's idea seems to be what Léopold Lacour calls "un vague socialisme patronal." Edmond Stoullig seems to imply that Brioux considers all charity useless and dangerous (*Annales*, 1908, p. 110). But Landrecy would have succeeded if his men had understood his intentions. Hence the moral: The impenetrable barrier between capital and labour must first be demolished. Cf. Tolstoy, *What Is to Be Done?* chs. vii, xiv.



the play; it would be too much to expect the dramatist to solve the whole problem of charity. His business is, in a social play, to develop situations so as to make reprehensible abuses stand out prominently and, if he pleases, to suggest a solution, or at least a step in the right direction.<sup>1</sup> This Brieux has done by showing the efficacy of sympathy and kindness on the part of Landrecy after condemning Escaudin's revolting heartlessness. But the piece is more successful as a satire than in point of thesis. The author would have done better merely to content himself with a denunciation of fashionable charity and the routine and insolence of those in charge of public charity.<sup>2</sup> His satire is complete and to the point.

*Le Repas du Lion* (*The Lion's Feast*), a drama by François de Curel a year later than *Les Bien-*

<sup>1</sup> In this connection, Doumic says: "It is not so much a matter of settling such questions. It is important rather to draw to them the attention of thoughtful men, and to interest their imagination and sympathy as well as their intelligence. The real point is to put ideas into circulation." *Deux Mondes*, Aug. 15, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> This does not satisfy Augustin Filon, who thinks that a drama requires definite conclusions, "a frank adherence to one side or the other," and not merely a philosophic "suspension of judgment." (*De Dumas à Rostand*, p. 192.) A dramatist would be a supernatural being if he could solve the problems involved in *Les Bienfaiteurs*. Unfortunately Brieux's conception is obscured by his allusions to Tolstoy. Since the Landrecys are ardent admirers of the Russian apostle, whose *bonté* is proverbial, we should expect their efforts to have succeeded on that score; and yet our dramatist concludes that they have the wrong conception of *la bonté*.



*faiseurs*, is in a more serious vein. But here, as elsewhere, Curel is obscure and fails to reach a definite conclusion—perhaps in this case, to be sure, because of the difficulty of his theme, industrial socialism.<sup>1</sup>

The Count de Sancy, a half-ruined country nobleman, is the business associate of Boussard, an industrial employer, whose son has married the Count's daughter. Having discovered coal under Sancy's land, Boussard turns the forest of venerable trees into an industrial city. This vandalism grieves young Jean de Sancy, an ardent lover of the forest and the chase. In a fit of youthful rage, he floods the mines at a time when he thinks that all the miners are out. One of them, however, having remained below, is drowned. Jean, in his remorse, vows that he will consecrate his life to the cause of labour. He becomes the favourite orator of the Catholic labour organizations, but only to desert their cause, eventually, in favour of Boussard's industrial egotism. Enraged over Jean's treason, Boussard's workmen strike, and in the conflict that follows, their former idol falls mortally wounded.

According to the theory of Boussard, who represents the author, an employer is like a powerful lion which, after satisfying his appetite, leaves the remnants of his royal feast to the jackals.

<sup>1</sup> E. Stoullig declares that it is a formidable undertaking to bring the social question upon the stage. *Annales*, 1897, p. 281.

They, helpless without their benefactor, have nothing to gain by his destruction. The "lion" declares that there is only one class of helpful beings, namely, those who open up new channels of human activity; that the immense majority of men depend on the brains and initiative of a few.<sup>1</sup> His aristocratic conception of industrial beneficence favours the creation of great bodies of workmen analogous to the old corporations. He would invest employers with a sort of paternal authority deserving of filial gratitude. But *Le Repas du Lion* is inconclusive, since the "jackals" refuse to content themselves with the "lion's" leavings.

Octave Mirbeau, in his drama, *Les Mauvais Bergers* (*The Bad Shepherds*), of the same year, 1897, takes quite the opposite point of view. He endeavours to contrast the selfishness and harshness of bourgeois employers with the poverty and suffering of their employés, and to show that no reliance is to be placed on the promises of socialist deputies, the "bad shepherds."<sup>2</sup>

Mirbeau presents supposedly specimen scenes of revolting misery and gives us to understand that frequently labourers succumb to the inhuman tasks of factory work before the age of

<sup>1</sup> One of Marcel Prévost's benefactors, who has got his start by forging checks, advances a similar argument: "Aujourd'hui des centaines de gens vivent par moi, travaillent par moi. J'ai créé des usines, des cités ouvrières, des crèches, des hôpitaux." *Pierre et Thérèse*, iii, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. R. Bazin, *Le Blé Qui Lève*, p. 268.

twenty. He makes gruesome allusions to the cemetery dotted with the graves of the proprietor's victims,<sup>1</sup> forming a vivid contrast with the luxurious residence of the factory-owner, Hargand. Yet Hargand is not happy, for his son, Robert, condemns his principles and carries on a socialist propaganda.<sup>2</sup> His efforts to better the conditions of his workmen fail, because he has proceeded without due regard for their sensitiveness and short-sightedness.<sup>3</sup> The promises of deputies whom the men have trusted avail them nothing. They strike and in a clash with the troops, Robert Hargand falls at the head of the strikers.<sup>4</sup> The grief-stricken father, touched by the heart-rending spectacle of mourning widows and mothers, offers to adopt them all.

Are we to infer from this that, instead of attempting to provide institutions of material comfort and moral uplift for his workmen, an

<sup>1</sup> Boussard denies the employer's responsibility: "Une loi que nous n'avons pas faite oblige les hommes à travailler. Il faut du fer, il faut de la houille qu'on n'arrache pas à la terre qu'au prix d'efforts meurtriers." *Le Repas du Lion*, iii, 1.

<sup>2</sup> There are similar situations in Bourget's *La Barricade* and *Le Tribun*.

<sup>3</sup> The good intentions of the philanthropist in *La Clairière* (Donnay and Descaves) meet with ingratitude. In the final scene, a member of the "colony" smashes the benefactor's bust with his cane.

<sup>4</sup> Hargand receives a deputation of strikers, but drives them from his presence on hearing their demands. In Lavedan's *Les Deux Noblesses*, the strikers demand "pleine satisfaction des besoins et des jouissances pour tous, expropriation universelle, juste répartition des richesses communes, libre choix du labeur."

employer should merely pay them just wages and let them look out for themselves? Here, as in *Les Bienfaiteurs* and *Le Repas du Lion*, we see the same barrier between labour and capital. Mirbeau, too, like Brieux, cries out against the stupidity of depending on the promises of "bad shepherds."

Lucien Gleize's *Charité* (1897) in some respects resembles *Les Mauvais Bergers*. A labourer, Guichard, is hurt in doing his difficult factory work. His employer offers an indemnity, which Guichard is about to accept, in order to safeguard his wife and children, when the head of the workmen's syndicate interferes, declaring the indemnity insufficient. During the conflict that follows, Guichard, failing to obtain anything, resorts to assassination in revenge. A charitable duchess adopts his children, the syndicate provides for his wife, and the press starts a movement to obtain his acquittal.

Here we see various conceptions of "charity."<sup>1</sup> A curate makes a spiritual revival in the Guichard family a condition of his financial assistance. The manufacturer, by voluntarily offering an indemnity, practices charity as he understands it. The syndicate leader has charitable intentions, which, however, fail. Finally, the Duchess, in adopting Guichard's children, shows true benevolence. The author sympathizes with

<sup>1</sup> In *Le Veau d'Or* (1913), Gleize satirizes a parvenu philanthropist.



the labourer, but criticises his method of procedure.

Paul Bourget sees the industrial conflict in a different light. It is as natural for him to sympathize with the employer as for Mirbeau to array himself on the side of the striker. We are told that in *La Barricade* (*The Barricade*, 1910) Bourget has confined himself to the facts of reality. This makes his drama a play with a purpose rather than a thesis play.

Breschard, a manufacturer of artistic furniture, occupies in Paris what was once the residence of a duke. A part of his employés, under the secret leadership of the foreman, Langouet, think it time to down the bourgeois "usurpers of 1789," either by a strike or a revolution. On the other side of the "barricade" are a few loyal workmen and Louise, the overseer of the women. Breschard's son, inclined to socialism, at first refuses to believe the reports about the foreman, for he has always treated Langouet as a comrade. But Langouet forces the issue, in spite of Breschard's appeal to the strikers' sense of reason, and Louise deserts to his side. In the end the strike-breakers win and events show the stupidity and malice of Breschard's ungrateful workmen. Completely disillusioned, young Breschard disavows socialism and becomes his father's associate. Langouet, humiliated, takes to drinking, but Breschard's loyal workmen obtain for him a position in a new co-operative establishment financed by Breschard himself.



A comparison of *La Barricade* with *Les Mauvais Bergers* and *Charité* makes it clear that in the treatment of such social problems much depends on which side enjoys the dramatist's sympathy. This, of course, must not lead him to discriminating partisanship. Thanks to his broad-minded views, Bourget has avoided making this mistake. Yet he succeeds in justifying his standpoint, though naturally enough he does not solve the industrial question.

The two recent novels that treat of philanthropical questions dispense with the labour strike; but in each we find one class of the poor ready to revolt against society. J.-H. Rosny, though feeling deep compassion for these poor, does not hold society responsible for their sufferings. He seems to regard wealth as a greater misfortune than poverty. Édouard Quet, on the other hand, lays the blame squarely upon the present social order and the wealthy, whom, as he implies, it favours at the expense of the poor.

Rosny's conception of the legitimate dignity of charitable work and workers is developed in *L'Impérieuse Bonté* (*Self-Willed Kindliness*, 1894).<sup>1</sup> The central character is Dargelle, a harsh but generous millionaire who purposes to let himself

<sup>1</sup> Rosny rejects the Russian apostle's doctrine of humility and renunciation, declaring that pride and genius can develop their activity as profitably in altruism as in science or art. His types are aggressive persons conscious of their dignity, at times even haughty.

be swindled as little as possible by the pseudo-poor. His capable secretary, Fougeraye, investigates each case personally, but always refrains from humiliating the mendicant. He finds many deserving poor, a few fraudulent beggars, and others who demand assistance in the name of social justice. After a thorough acquaintance with the work, Fougeraye (the author's spokesman) makes a report, the fundamental idea of which is: "It suffices that *la bonté* should of itself be worthy of our efforts; that it aggrandize and develop those who cultivate it, making them more capable of understanding life and happiness. Altruism will thus solve the question of future punishment and reward."<sup>1</sup> This liberal but somewhat obscure conception of altruism lays aside all absolute moral codes. It aims at an experimental form of charity free from brutality and ever seeking to adapt itself to the conditions of wretchedness. Rosny tells us further that this "self-willed" *bonté* must not engage in political, religious, or even moral, propaganda.<sup>2</sup> He acknowledges the merit of public charity, but thinks it insufficient. Seriously as it is intended, *L'Impérieuse Bonté*, owing to mysticism and improbable plot, unfortunately lacks reality.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *L'Impérieuse Bonté*, p. 340.

<sup>2</sup> One of Rosny's types represents positivism; another is a devout Catholic. Fougeraye is a mystic, while Dargelle might be called a mystic fatalist.

<sup>3</sup> In *Sous le Fardeau*, his masterpiece, which appeared twelve years later, Rosny concludes that we must practise charity,

Édouard Quet's novel, *Les Charitables* (1908), is both a caustic, but fairly just, satire on fashionable charity and a condemnation of philanthropy in general. His heroine, Mme. d'Arlanc, whose father has amassed considerable wealth by speculation, takes up charitable work as a means of rising above the ordinary, frivolous rich. She sincerely believes that she is one of the chosen few, notwithstanding the remark of her cousin, Méru, the author's "reasoner," that she will be a professional benefactor but never a "femme de bien."<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless she works conscientiously with her secretary, Vivanti, organizing, investigating, and classifying, even to the neglect of her home. She is sometimes exposed to violent attacks on the part of the dignified poor, who ask only to live and let live, instead of being driven to despair by the competition of poor-house labour.<sup>2</sup> No wonder she exclaims: "A charity worker must have courage."<sup>3</sup> Her task is made

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but not to the extent of self-sacrifice. The strong must not, for the benefit of inferior creatures, assume burdens which might weaken them and destroy their usefulness.

<sup>1</sup> At one place she says: "Je ne réclame aucune reconnaissance à mes obligés."

<sup>2</sup> Lucien Descaves seems to conclude in *La Cage* (1898) that for the poor there exist but two courses: revolution or suicide.

<sup>3</sup> In *Le Médecin de Campagne*, Balzac says: "Le bien obscurément fait ne tente personne." Maxime Du Camp admits frankly that "abstract virtue" is rare, and that people like to receive some tangible reward for their good deeds. *La Charité privée à Paris*, p. 2.

the more difficult by the mutual jealousy of the "workers." Thus discord and jealousy threaten Mme. d'Arlanc's supreme ambition, to obtain the cross of the Legion of Honour.<sup>1</sup> Eventually she reaches the coveted goal, but at the cost of twofold disaster. Her "trusted" Vivanti absconds, after long systematic falsification of accounts; and her daughter, who has gone wrong for lack of maternal guidance, blames her in bitter words: "Your paupers, mother, have been sacrificed for a woman [Vivanti's mistress], and I have been sacrificed for your orphans." At the end, the sensible cousin sums up his conception of charity thus: "Some fortunes are covered with a veil, which it is prudent not to remove. Isn't beneficence their ransom?"<sup>2</sup>

From the analysis of the attitude of the recent French drama and, to a certain extent, of the novel,

<sup>1</sup> Georges Lecomte and Alfred Capus excel in satire on fashionable charity. Cf. Lecomte's article, "Bienfaisance et Charité," *Rev. Bleue*, Nov. 12, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> Varying phases of our theme have been treated in numerous other works. Jules Lemaître shows the failure of charity as a mere caprice (*Mariage Blanc*). André Picard develops the psychological evolution of a philanthropic soul (*La Confidente*). In *Les Mouettes* Paul Adam represents a wife willing to sacrifice her happiness for the benefit of mankind. The humorous side of charity is emphasized by Alfred Capus (*Les Passagères*); also by Gustave Guiches (*Vouloir*). Édouard Rod believes that kindness and self-sacrifice are the true sources of happiness (*Le Double*). Paul Bourget stigmatizes ostentatious beneficence (*L'Émigré*, iii). Paul Margueritte censures narrow-minded benefactors (*La Tourmente*, ch. iv), and commends true charity (*Nous, les Mères*, pt. ii, ch. iv).



towards the question of charity, it is evident that, if confined strictly to facts, our conclusion can indicate only general tendencies. Any rational grouping of authors must be based on the broad social and industrial aspects of the question; for sociologists and political economists are more and more inclined to regard charity as a question of social solidarity. From this standpoint, the relative merit of employer and employé becomes the most important factor, and an author who represents an industrial conflict can usually be classified according to the side of the "barricade" he defends. On this basis, our authors, all of whom have made more or less use of industrial conflict, may be divided into three groups: partisans of the employer, who believe that social reforms can be effected best by the "charity" of the well-to-do; partisans of the employé, who demand "social justice," which shall make "charity" unnecessary; and those whose attitude depends on circumstances, since they believe that neither right nor wrong is wholly with either side. To the first group belong Curel, Bourget, Lemaître, Lavedan, Bazin, and Rosny; to the second, Mirbeau, Descaves, and Édouard Quet. Brieux and Lucien Gleize may be classed as irregulars. Brieux, as we have seen, believes that industrial philanthropy would prove a success if undertaken in the proper spirit. At least in the dispute between Landrecy and his employés, while showing that both sides are at fault, he



sympathizes most with the employer. Gleize, on the contrary, undoubtedly favours his labourer's cause, but deplores the folly of his actions. Whereas Gleize's social tendency as manifested in one of his recent dramas<sup>1</sup> would justify classing him with Mirbeau, Brioux has become more conservative since 1896.

Whatever be the doctrinal differences of these authors, however seriously their views may conflict, they all realize the non-material difficulties involved in a solution of the charity problem. The most striking characteristic of the works we have examined is the implied importance of tact, discretion, and good sense in charity work.<sup>2</sup> Lack of these qualities constitutes the great obstacle to good understanding between the various classes of society; it is largely this obstacle that Tolstoy, like Brioux, referred to as the barrier separating the classes. By "barrier" they mean very nearly what we often hear of as the conflict between labour and capital. To a certain extent the terms do mean one and the same thing. The conflict can never be decided without first tearing down the barrier.

This necessity was fully realized, in literature,

<sup>1</sup> *Le Veau d'Or*.

<sup>2</sup> H. Kisternaekers's hero in *Le Marchand de Bonheur* (1910), on discovering the harm that his philanthropy has done, exclaims: "I am a criminal! He who would make others happy must use the greatest discretion." Bernard Shaw declares that an immoderately good man is very much more dangerous than an immoderately bad man.

by the Russian and the English novelists who sincerely loved the humble.<sup>1</sup> It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the works of Dostoevski and of Tolstoy, of Dickens and George Eliot, contributed more towards removing the social barrier than did the legislation of their time. In France we have seen the influence of such authors as Michelet and Hugo. But French naturalism, unfortunately, did not take a sympathetic interest in the poor. Hence the class-levelling influence of a Flaubert, a Goncourt, or a Zola was practically nil.

Renan early formed a truly admirable conception of the results to be sought in a solution of the social-industrial question; but owing to his aristocratic principles, he naturally hoped to attain these results by other means than those since advocated by Brieux. In *L'Avenir de la Science*, he says<sup>2</sup>:

The aim of society is the greatest possible perfection of all. Material comfort has value only in so far as it is to a certain extent the indispensable condition of intellectual perfection.

And again<sup>3</sup>:

The remedy for the social evil is not to enable the poor to become rich, or to awaken in them this

<sup>1</sup> According to Renan, "la vraie grandeur, c'est d'être vu grand par l'œil des humbles."

<sup>2</sup> Page 378.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 417.

desire, but to make wealth a matter of secondary consideration, so that without it one may be happy, noble, and influential.

Renan's ideals leave nothing to be desired. The only question in the minds of our dramatists and novelists is, how to realize these lofty ideals. On this all-important point, their views doubtless differ widely from those of Renan, who expected the reign of science and truth to effect the moral regeneration of men.<sup>1</sup> But if all are agreed upon the goal and are conscious of the difficulties involved in reaching it, substantial progress has already been made. Charity-workers, the promoters of industrial beneficence, and the champions of "social justice" will probably find that their differences are not irreconcilable, if once they understand that all are striving for the same end.

<sup>1</sup> In *Le Prêtre de Nemi*, Renan says: "We follow the Good without being sure that we are not being deceived in doing so; and yet, even if we knew of a certainty that we were deceived, we should follow it all the same."

## CHAPTER VIII

### LITERATURE AND SCIENCE

*L'Évasion* (Brieux) — *Le Docteur Pascal* (Zola)—*L'Obstacle* (A. Daudet)—*Yvette* (Maupassant)—*Margot* (Meilhac)—*Le Détour* (Bernstein)—*La Nouvelle Idole* (Curel)—*Les Morticoles* (L. Daudet)—*Le Mal Nécessaire* (Couvreur).

TEN years ago [says René Doumic, writing in 1894], people were positivists and realists. They boasted that mystery had been exorcised.<sup>1</sup> A new determinism was in vogue. . . . But the period of scientific infatuation having passed, some persons now affect a contempt for science which is as regrettable as the excessive favour it recently enjoyed.<sup>2</sup>

Or, as Alfred Fouillée writes: "After passing through a period in which . . . the intelligence was in revolt against the heart, we enter another period, in which the heart is in revolt against the intelligence."<sup>3</sup> In other words, humanity, according to Émile Boutroux, seems to go forward after the fashion of a drunken man—now escaping

<sup>1</sup> Adrien Sixte declares: "Il n'y a pas de mystère, il n'y a que des ignorances." *Le Disciple*, p. 329.

<sup>2</sup> "Littérature et Dégénérescence," *Deux Mondes*, Jan. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Le Mouvement Idéaliste* (1896), p. v.

a fall to the right by staggering far to the left, now staggering just as far to the right, and so on indefinitely.<sup>1</sup> Thus we meet again the general law of change and contrast which Brunetière applied with such marvellous results to the evolution of literary genres. This time, the overconfident champions of science, by unwarranted encroachment upon the domains of æsthetics, of philosophy, and of religion, precipitated the reaction. Excessive pretensions compromise the best of causes, turning the fond hopes of its followers into disappointment and hostility. Is it surprising that disastrous reaction followed the unparalleled development of science between 1840 and 1880? Reasoning from a few established or hypothetical laws, enthusiasts boldly drew the most far-reaching conclusions. Renan, Taine, Zola made promises that even the genius of a Claude Bernard, a Pasteur, a Berthelot could not fulfil.

"Renan," declares Gustave Lanson, "believed in science more ardently than any one."<sup>2</sup> To him science was the source of all truth, the dispenser of all laws, the co-ordinator of all principles,<sup>3</sup> a religion which alone could solve the eternal

<sup>1</sup> "Science et Culture," *Rev. Bleue*, Dec. 6, 1913.

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. de la Litt. fr.*, 10th ed., p. 1079. "Imagine the social revolution that will result," Renan exclaims naïvely, "when, by imitating the work of plants, chemistry shall have discovered the means of producing foods superior to those which vegetation and animals furnish." *Dialogues Philos.*

<sup>3</sup> G. Séailles, *E. Renan*, p. 8.



problems of mankind.<sup>1</sup> Taine, while less extreme than Renan, has been called "one of the prophets of the religion of science."<sup>2</sup> Zola, the "arch-priest of the temple of heredity," mounted upon a tripod, to use an expression of Édouard Rod, every time he spoke of the "sovereign laws of science."<sup>3</sup> And Balzac, who had considered himself a "doctor of social science," Auguste Comte, the founder of the positivist creed, Sainte-Beuve, Flaubert, the Goncourts, Leconte de Lisle, Littré, and Sully Prudhomme were all fervent worshippers at the new shrine.

The immense prestige of this galaxy of devotees assured a rapid triumph of the new cult. Thought was invaded by positivism; art, by naturalism. Analysis dominated criticism; realism reigned in literature. Religion gave way to scepticism. Scholarship, criticism, the novel, poetry (especially that of the Parnassian School),—all become scientific.<sup>4</sup> The masses, to whom the promises

<sup>1</sup> *Avenir de la Science*, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> V. Giraud, "La Personne et l'Œuvre de Taine," *Deux Mondes*, Feb. 1, 1908. According to G. Monod, however, Taine early formed a clear conception of the legitimate domain of science, and hence guarded against entertaining extravagant hopes. (*Renan, Taine, Michelet*, p. 148.) Monod and Giraud probably differ only regarding the date of Taine's disillusion, which Paul Bourget would place after *Les Essais* (1858) and *La Littérature Anglaise* (1863). Some would extend the date so as to include *L'Intelligence* (1870).

<sup>3</sup> *Idées Mor. du Temps Prés.*

<sup>4</sup> When in 1837 Arago predicted "the imminent predominance of scientific education," Lamartine expressed the conviction that

of material comfort make such a strong appeal, easily persuaded themselves that immediate, tangible happiness was preferable to vague hopes of future reward. In other words, "*la raison de la royauté de la science, c'est l'amour du bonheur.*"<sup>1</sup> But unfortunately happiness, even in its so-called tangible form, is only a relative conception, which may fail to satisfy its possessor. For the maximum, once obtained, is likely to seem disappointing when compared with our expectations, especially if we have hoped for a panacea.

With due recognition of the marvellous achievements of science, we can understand why infinitely greater results were expected from it, and why, on its failing to fulfil its "promises,"<sup>2</sup> the cries "failure" and "bankruptcy" were raised.<sup>3</sup> Such men as Brunetière, Tolstoy, and Nietzsche now had their *revanche*.<sup>4</sup> Brunetière

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harm would result to the moral sciences, which, he declared, were infinitely more essential to mankind than the mathematical or the natural sciences.

<sup>1</sup> É. Faguet, *Quest. Pol.*, p. 300.

<sup>2</sup> Paul de Broglie remarks in this connection that "he who promises must keep his word." *La Réaction contre le Positivisme* (1894), p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Lamartine declares that "la plus terrible et la plus meurtrière des passions à donner aux masses, c'est la passion de l'impossible. Ne trompez pas l'homme, vous le rendriez fou, et quand, de la folie sacrée de votre idéal, vous le laisseriez retomber sur l'aridité de ses misères, vous le rendriez fou furieux." Max Nordau assures us that "the Jesuits invented the fiction of the bankruptcy of science." *Degeneracy*, i, 180.

<sup>4</sup> "Aux yeux de Nietzsche, la science est une chimère." E. Schuré, "Nietzsche en France," *Rev. Bleue*, Sept. 8, 1900.

rightfully laid the blame, not upon science, nor even upon scientists, but upon the intemperate spokesmen of science. "Those," he declared, "who today have on their lips the great names Claude Bernard, Darwin, Pasteur, forget, in pronouncing these names with such *éclat*, how much courage and genius Pasteur, Darwin, and Claude Bernard had to expend, in order to triumph over the extravagant claims made by the savants of their time."<sup>1</sup> In an earlier article, which called forth wide comment, Brunetière, after quoting Renan and other devotees of science to show that they did in fact make extravagant promises, asserts that the natural and physical sciences have not succeeded in explaining the nature of man as man—that is, a being endowed with thought, will, and conscience.<sup>2</sup> He furthermore denies that the physical and historical sciences have yielded any of the really important results expected from them. Tolstoy expressed the same thought when he wrote: "The men of modern science are very fond of saying with solemn assurance: 'We study facts alone,' imagining that these words have meaning."<sup>3</sup> This explains his contempt for doctors, whom he calls "the pontiffs of science."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Éducation et Instruction*. This criticism may or may not have been directed against Renan. Brunetière simply says that Renan was not a savant and that he had no right to speak in the name of science.

<sup>2</sup> *Après une Visite au Vatican*.

<sup>3</sup> *What Is to Be Done?* ch. xxix.      <sup>4</sup> *Kreutzer Sonata*, ch. v.

The reaction against science in France was both spiritual and political. Catholics and Protestants, mystics<sup>1</sup> and conservatives supported the movement. And not a few disappointed converts of science deserted to their ranks. Standard-bearers like Paul Bourget, Édouard Rod, Paul Desjardins,<sup>2</sup> Vogüé, Édouard Schuré, were followed by such writers as Barrès, Coppée, Huysmans, Lemaître, Bazin, and Léon Daudet. Brioux and François de Curel accorded at least their moral sympathy to the deserters.<sup>3</sup> A similar reaction manifested itself gradually in philosophy, thanks to the evolution of Fouillée, Boutroux, and Bergson. The victorious advance of science was checked by Pasteur himself, who refused to let it dictate to him in matters of faith and conscience.<sup>4</sup> Claude Bernard assumed the same attitude when he insisted on separating physiology from spiritual questions.<sup>5</sup>

That disciples of Zola like Rod and Huysman should have sought new ideals, was not so surpris-

<sup>1</sup> The symbolists and the mystics owed their literary tendencies to their horror of "naturalism" and the materialistic nudity of science.

<sup>2</sup> See *Le Devoir Présent* (1892), pp. 5, 8, 39, for Desjardins's attacks upon science.

<sup>3</sup> Max Nordau declares that the reaction against science was due entirely to the degeneracy of its instigators. *Degeneracy*, i, 176.

<sup>4</sup> Renan says: "Je ne conçois la haute science, la science comprenant son but et sa fin, qu'en dehors de toute croyance surnaturelle." *Avenir de la Science*, p. 43.

<sup>5</sup> A. Rambaud, *Hist. de la Civ. Contemp. en France*, p. 675.



ing as the "defection" of Bourget and Barrès, both disciples of Taine and admirers of Renan. Bourget's change of attitude may be seen by comparing his *Essais de Psychologie* with *Le Disciple* (1889). In the former, dated 1882 but based on earlier convictions, we read: "*La science dépasse les espérances les plus hardies.*" Seven years later, Bourget not only satirized the claims of Renan and Ribot regarding science, but made a persuasive appeal to the younger generation not to become the disciples of such dangerous theorists.<sup>1</sup> And more recently he has declared that owing to its limitations, science is not equipped to furnish an explanation of the universe or to solve the mystery of life.<sup>2</sup> The evolution of Maurice Barrès has scarcely been less pronounced than Bourget's, though it seems that Barrès was actuated primarily by political and patriotic motives. Even Renan and Taine, pillars of the temple of science, became somewhat unsteady as time went on. Taine's reputation as a reactionary, however, is based not so much on a change in his attitude toward science in its restricted sense as on the conservative tone of the latter volumes of his *Origines*, a work which, oddly enough, became "one of the breviaries of the young Catholic-royalist school."<sup>3</sup> That Re-

<sup>1</sup> *Le Disciple*, pref. and pp. 114-316.

<sup>2</sup> *Pages de Crit.*, ii, 313.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, 315. Interesting is Flaubert's satire, *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, which, for a time regarded as his masterpiece, has



nan, too, saw the limitations of science, is indicated by his *Lettre à Berthelot*. But in "retractions" he went no further than to say that "science gives happiness when we content ourselves with asking only for what it can yield."<sup>1</sup> Zola, in an endeavour to silence annoying protests, took the unassailable but somewhat vague standpoint that science had not promised happiness at all; that it had merely promised truth.

This brief survey sketches the "misunderstanding" that grew out of the scientific "ideas of 1850."<sup>2</sup> We now come to the reflection of the conflict in literature. In such conflicts, the side in the ascendancy (here victorious science) remains on the defensive, or even passive, awaiting the attack of the opposition. From the nature of things, in the present case, professional representatives of science make the best targets for

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been called "an indictment of human thought itself." (É. Faguet, *Flaubert*, p. 134.) In this work, according to Faguet, Flaubert bears science a grudge for its obscurities. He covers his two bourgeois with ridicule because their scientific undertakings all end in miserable failure. Cf. ch. iii, which treats of science. Brieux's recent play, *Le Bourgeois aux Champs*, which is based in part on the theme of *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, sheds new light on his attitude towards science.

<sup>1</sup> *Disc. de Réception* (1879).

<sup>2</sup> "These words," says Michel Salomon, "are known as the sign of a kind of creed of which the basic article is the sovereignty of science, of science reduced to facts, one set of facts explaining another." ("Triomphe de l'Esprit Positiviste," *Rev. Bleue*, July 5, 1902.) According to Brunetière, positivism excludes metaphysical speculation and limits science to what can be counted, measured, or weighed.

satire. Hence the frequent attacks on the medical profession. From among the numerous literary works treating the theme of science, I have selected as typical four dramas and two novels on heredity, one satire in dramatic form on science as the "new idol," and two general satires on doctors. First and fullest treatment is due, as usual, to Brioux's *L'Évasion* (*The Escape*, 1896); none of the other works to be discussed equals it in literary merit.

M. de Morsier, in explaining the genesis of the piece, tells us that Brioux met one night in the Latin Quarter an artist who was drinking his talent away because, being the son of a drunkard, he thought himself hopelessly condemned to drunkenness. Heredity immediately appeared to Brioux as an "accursed jail" and he realized the necessity of crying out with all his might that its captives can free themselves; that the so-called "fatal laws of heredity" are not fatal at all.<sup>1</sup> The three-act comedy in which he has embodied these ideas had the honour of a first representation at the Comédie Française and was crowned by the French Academy.<sup>2</sup> The satire is directed against the presumption of pseudo-scientists who, with their authoritative decrees and "infallibility,"

<sup>1</sup> "E. Brioux," *Rev. Bleue*, Dec. 12, 1903.

<sup>2</sup> The Toirac prize of eight hundred dollars, though founded by a member of the medical profession, was awarded to *L'Évasion* as the best piece produced at Molière's playhouse during the year.

exercise a baneful influence over people of weak will. More specifically Brieux develops the question: Can the child of a suicide father or of a courtesan mother become a normal being, in spite of the obsessing theories of a specialist in heredity who declares the child's emancipation impossible?

In order to obtain the Commander's Cross of the Legion of Honour, Brieux's specialist, Dr. Bertry, a member of the Paris Academy of Medicine and professor of neuropathology, has his assistant, La Belleuse, prepare his biography. This emphasizes particularly Bertry's monumental works on heredity (twelve volumes published by Alcan), the fruits of thirty years' research, in which he has far surpassed his predecessors and fixed for all time the laws of this science.

In view of these "infallible" laws, Dr. Bertry declares that his stepson, Jean Belmont, is doomed to hypochondria and melancholy, because the boy's father committed suicide. He likewise regards his younger brother's daughter, Lucienne, whom he has brought up, as a victim of heredity, because her mother was a courtesan. But the two young people, having fallen in love with each other, resolve to marry and occupy Jean's country estate near Ebreville, in the hope of escaping from the prison to which heredity has condemned them. Their project meets with the emphatic approval of both Dr. Richon, an unpretentious physician of Ebreville, and Lucienne's father, who questions his brother's theories. In

a dispute with Dr. Bertry over the marriage, the younger brother, speaking for the author, says that he is tired of the absurd heredity hobby. To him religious superstition which, he declares, the present atheistic generation has abandoned for the superstition of science, is preferable and makes fewer victims.<sup>1</sup> It seems to him and Dr. Richon that the presumptuous theories of heredity only belittle human character and make the living terrified prisoners of the dead. As it turns out, they are right; for after the marriage of the couple, Jean, now a gentleman-farmer, becomes splendidly healthy and cheerful. Lucienne, however, fearing that emancipation from her uncle's obsessing theories is impossible, soon yearns for the frivolity of Parisian life. Her flirtation with Paul de Maucour, a former suitor, precipitates a violent quarrel with Jean. While visiting them, Dr. Bertry meets *le père Guernoche*, a shepherd-healer who, without giving medicine, has cured cases pronounced hopeless by him. The scene between the renowned specialist (he is carrying an armful of medical literature) and the shepherd-doctor is truly Moliéresque. Mystified and impressed by the magic healing skill of *le père Guernoche*,

<sup>1</sup> La Belleuse says: "There is not a human being who knows our professional quality who won't get anxious if we look at him steadily." This confirms the assertion of Abel Hermant, who writes: "The sick have always had this confidence—this morbid confidence—in their doctors; but in the past it was intermittent, limited to times of sickness and tempered with French scepticism. It tends more and more to resemble the fanaticism of religion."

Bertry, who is suffering from a mysterious cardiac ailment, would like to take treatment with him, but his professional dignity forbids. Yet on receiving the coveted Cross of the Legion of Honour, he confesses to his brother, during a recurrence of his malady, that he has not believed in medicine for some time. Seizing the psychological moment, the brother urges him to assure Jean and Lucienne that his claims regarding morbid heredity are premature; that we all have in us sufficient energy to overcome such obstacles. So Dr. Bertry does, begging their pardon for the wrong done them. Thus the young couple, who have been on the verge of separation, soon reach a reconciliation, thanks to this dissipation of the obsessing spell and proof that Maucour is unworthy of Lucienne's love. In this way, both victims of heredity escape from their prison.

Jules Lemaître thinks that in this play Brioux's problem ends with the first act, for after the young couple's marriage, their troubles need not be attributed to heredity.<sup>1</sup> However that may be, the first act is the best technically. It is almost pure satire, since satire is the most effective weapon against such bold presumption as Dr. Bertry's. It also makes skilful use of the "reasoner"—that convenient personage of the older drama that Brioux revived as early as *Ménages d'Artistes*. In fact in *L'Évasion* there are two reasoners. Dr. Richon—we shall meet him again, by

<sup>1</sup> *Impressions*, x, 49.



the way, in *Les Remplaçantes*—representing provincial modesty, makes us understand the arrogance of his Parisian *confrères*. But he is not qualified to dispute with Dr. Bertry, who would overwhelm him with his professional prestige. Besides, it is sometimes convenient to bring a question out of the domain of professional technicalities. Hence the rôle of the younger Bertry, who furthermore can speak to his brother far more freely than Richon without seeming rude.

The rest of the play, except the admirable scenes in which *le père Guernoche* appears, is not so good. In fact the second act is defective in psychology as well as technique. The young husband's nature prepares us poorly for his jealous quarrel with Lucienne. The scenes of the Belmonts' life in the country lack the vividness of reality; we are not made to feel sufficiently Lucienne's loneliness. The more worldly characters, with the exception of La Belleuse, Dr. Bertry's assistant, are artificial. It has been said, too, that Lucienne does not show enough determination to resist her "fatal heritage"—not so much as Jean, who is admirable in his strength of purpose. We must remember, however, that her life in her uncle's house brought her more directly under the influence of his theories than Jean.

But the vital part of the play—that is, the attack on the presumption of science—fully deserves Jules Lemaître's praise: that it is probably "the cleverest and keenest satire on medical

science and doctors since the time of Molière.”<sup>1</sup> Not that the drama is an attack on medicine in general. Brieux’s sympathetic attitude towards the doctor, his personal representative in three later plays—*Le Berceau*, *Les Remplaçantes*, *Les Avariés*, proves that he holds the medical profession in high esteem. But with extravagant and dangerous claims of medical science, with medical insincerity that may go so far as to suggest charlatanism, Brieux has not the slightest patience.<sup>2</sup>

In connection with *L’Évasion*, we may mention by way of contrast *Le Docteur Pascal* (*Doctor Pascal*), a novel of Zola’s published in 1893, in which suggestions for Brieux’s play can be detected. With Zola, the most enthusiastic exponent of heredity among leading French men of letters, it was a dogma<sup>3</sup> or, as Doumic says, he knew only one law: heredity, in which he had unlimited faith.<sup>4</sup> His hero, Dr. Pascal, who is what Dr. Bertry falsely claims to be, has, like Bertry, devoted thirty years to the study of heredity, piling up document upon document; like Bertry, too, he is assisted by a niece. Both send

<sup>1</sup> *Impressions*.

<sup>2</sup> Naturally the medical profession fell tooth and nail upon the play, though admitting its literary success. Dr. A. Prieur, who calls Dr. Bertry a “guignol incohérent,” declares that Brieux had no conception of the scientific aspect of the subject. (“De ‘l’Évasion’ aux ‘Avariés,’” *Mercure de France*, Dec., 1901.) Subsequently the magistracy assume the same disdainful attitude towards *La Robe Rouge*.

<sup>3</sup> J. du Tillet, *Rev. Bleue*, July 16, 1892.

<sup>4</sup> *Deux Mondes*, June 15, 1900.

numerous communications to the Academy of Medicine. Finally, Pascal, like Bertry, has a cardiac ailment, to which he succumbs.

The novel is a sort of clearing house for the Rougon-Macquarts, the family whose hereditary traits Zola studies in his twenty volumes. Dr. Pascal's remarks to his niece when he deigns to explain the sacred truths of heredity, justify not only the book that bears his name, but the author's many other volumes as well. "What an immense fresco there is to be painted!" he exclaims. "What a stupendous human tragedy, what a comedy there is to be written with heredity, which is the very genesis of families, of societies, and of the world!" It is heredity that makes imbeciles, madmen, criminals, and great men.<sup>1</sup> He accepts his own malady with resignation, knowing that it is "heredity, fated and inevitable."<sup>2</sup> Evidently Zola believed as firmly in the "fatal laws of heredity" as Dr. Bertry professed to believe

<sup>1</sup> Max Nordau, in his work on *Degeneracy* (1892), shows that all the literary men of talent in Europe, particularly those of France, are insane. Compare *The Sanity of Art*, a refutation of Nordau by Bernard Shaw. Charles Féré asserts that artistic temperament and genius are closely related to insanity. ("L'Hérédité Morbide," *Deux Mondes*, Nov. 15, 1894.) André Le Breton, after remarking that the difference between the insanity of a Rousseau and the cerebral exaltation of a Balzac is not great, says: "In reality, all men of great imagination are somewhat subject to Rousseau's insanity." *Balzac*, p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> As a satire on Zola's heredity mania, Marc Monnier wrote a novel, *Un Détraqué* (1883), whose hero, like Don Quixote, goes insane from reading *L'Assommoir* and *Nana*.

in them. *L'Évasion* seems like a disguised satire on *Le Docteur Pascal*.<sup>1</sup>

Alphonse Daudet, in his charming comedy, *L'Obstacle* (*The Obstacle*), produced in 1890, takes a more cheerful view of heredity. Didier d'Alein, a young marquis, is engaged to Madeleine, an orphan not yet of age and consequently at the mercy of her guardian. Didier's father, while in military service in Africa, went insane as the result of sunstroke. This occurred two years after the boy's birth, and as his mother has had him brought up away from his father, she has said nothing about the "fatal heritage" to Madeleine's relations. On learning of it, the guardian breaks the engagement, and when pressed for an explanation, hurls at Didier the cruel words: "People like you should be given a cold bath and sent to the asylum." Didier now consults specialists and broods over books on heredity, in which he finds discouraging theories like those of Dr. Bertry's. In order to save his life, his mother tries to make him believe that he is illegitimate.<sup>2</sup> But Didier renders this unnecessary

<sup>1</sup> Just how much Brieux owes to Zola, would be difficult to say. One critic calls Brieux "a confirmed naturalist." Another asserts that "he writes as one descending in part from the naturalists." Still another speaks of "Zola, whose influence is so marked in all of Brieux's works." Brieux has never committed himself further than to express admiration for *L'Assommoir*. It is doubtful whether he was influenced by Zola after his first two or three serious dramas.

<sup>2</sup> The heroic mother in *La Faute de Madame Bucières* (1884)

by his resolute stand. "I refuse," he says, "to accept blindly the new catechisms of modern science. We have in us a moral force which, if we will, can free us from these laws of fatality."<sup>1</sup> Didier's happiness is complete when Madeleine, having come of age, determines to marry him in spite of her guardian.

Daudet's optimistic solution, it may be said, begs the question, since he chooses a case of artificial heredity. In this he differs from Brieux in *L'Évasion*, for while Brieux separates his victims from their parents early in life, they are at least tainted with a "fatal" heritage. Nevertheless, Daudet's drama shows admirably the tyranny of the science of heredity; for if a sham scare can do so much harm, what must we expect from the reality?

The fate of natural children like Lucienne Ber-

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a novel by G. Pradcl, has recourse to the same fiction in a similar situation.

In *L'Étau* (1909), a drama by André Sardou, Jean Auriol's mother calms his fear of insanity by confessing to him that he is illegitimate. But his fiancée's mother, refusing to believe the truth, breaks the engagement. Finding in his despair that the curse, whether real or fictitious, is squeezing his brain like a "vise," Jean throws himself over a precipice.

<sup>1</sup> *Vouloir* (1913), a comedy by Gustave Guiches, satirizes the vaunted supremacy of the will. A famous physician, whose motto is, "Avec de la volonté on arrive à tout. . . . Il n'y a qu'à vouloir," saves the lives of two friends, a despondent widower and an unhappy widow, by bringing about their union. But when the doctor discovers that he himself loves the former widow more than he suspected, his maxim breaks down and he is obliged to flee.



try—those victims of both heredity and social prejudice—was dear to the romanticists. Dumas *fil*s continued to plead for them; and even Augier, the implacable author of *L'Aventurière* (1848) and *Le Mariage d'Olympe* (1854), espoused their cause in *Les Fourchambault* (1878). Though not all by any means are the children of courtesans, yet the chances are that heredity will be unfavourable to them. An illegitimate son, according to literary tradition, is much more likely than a girl to overcome the hostile forces of heredity and the prejudices of society. In three recent studies in the chances of natural daughters—Maupassant's *Yvette* (1884), Meilhac's *Margot* (1890), and Bernstein's *Le Détour* (1902)—heredity plays an important part.

Maupassant's *Yvette*, the daughter of a courtesan—a pseudo-marquise—is, like Mr. Shaw's Vivie Warren, grown before she discovers her mother's profession. Then the inevitable explanation follows. The girl makes her terms, threatening to leave home if her mother does not begin a new life at once. This threat *Yvette* carries out by an attempt at suicide, leaving a note in which she says: "I am taking my life, in order not to become a woman of fashionable prostitution." Her mother believes her threat, because she knows very well, as one of the characters says who represents Maupassant, that the girl

belongs by her birth, her education, and heredity

to the higher ranks of prostitution. She cannot escape unless she takes the veil. She cannot flee from destiny. When she ceases to be a young woman, she will become a woman of the street, that's all.<sup>1</sup>

Meilhac's *Margot* (1890) is a light comedy cut after Scribe's pattern, with a touch of romantic mystery. The heroine, a child of gallantry, loses her mother early in life and is protected by a courtesan and a wealthy bachelor, Boisvillette. They assert that they want Margot to be respectable, and finally Boisvillette asks the girl to marry him. But mindful of her origin, and resolved to stay in the path of virtue, she refuses because she fears the temptation of so much grandeur. Instead, she marries Boisvillette's game-keeper. The important point is that Margot's innate courage triumphs over the force of heredity. Fortunately she is not obsessed by Dr. Bertry's infallible theories.

Henry Bernstein's heroine in *Le Détour* (*The Detour*, 1902) fails to "make good" because he so wills it. Jacqueline's father and mother were living together in free love (since the father's

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Wolff illustrates this truth in *Leurs Filles* (1891). Compare, in Marcel Prévost's *Les Demi-Vierges* (1894), the words of Étiennette: "I am not at all sure of remaining virtuous: it is not easy for a girl of my origin." However, in *Frédérique*, a later novel, Prévost takes an optimistic view of the question. The heroine, an illegitimate child brought up amidst evil influences, becomes a leader in the work of social uplift. Alfred Capus makes one of his heroines say: "I am not at all ashamed of being a natural child." *Notre Jeunesse* (1904).

parents refused their consent to his marriage) when, shortly before her birth, her father was killed in an accident. Her mother became a courtesan, but gave her a good education. Jacqueline, though she loves her mother, has no desire to imitate her life. Unfortunately she marries into an austere Protestant family, whose well-meant protection, by making her feel every moment how much she owes to them, renders her situation intolerable. "It is in vain that she has made a detour towards the regular life of the bourgeoisie: being the daughter of a courtesan, she cannot escape her destiny."<sup>1</sup> But Jacqueline would have had nothing to fear from heredity, if the dramatist's caprice had not placed her in such an extraordinary situation.<sup>2</sup>

Yvette, Margot, and Jacqueline are not mere fantastical creations. They are as real as any Lucienne Bertry who might justify the worst of her uncle's fears. Hugues Le Roux remarks that the world seems to be governed by a great law of contrast—a law of irony, according to which frequently evil gives rise to good, and immorality to morality.<sup>3</sup> This "law of return"

<sup>1</sup> E. Stoullig, *Annales* (1902), p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> That Bernstein would not assign undue importance to the force of heredity is evident from his drama *Israël*. Here the hero, having been brought up in ignorance of his birth, becomes an arch enemy of the Jews, his father's race. It is possible, however, that the dramatist intends this feature as a satire on snobbery.

<sup>3</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Mar. 25, 1890.

as scientists call it, was admitted even by Zola's Dr. Pascal.

Belief in heredity, carried to its logical conclusion, leads to the explanation if not the justification, of crime. In Édouard Rod's novel, *L'Inutile Effort* (*The Useless Effort*, 1903), an attorney maintains that the only thesis possible in behalf of such criminals as anarchists is irresponsibility on the ground of heredity.<sup>1</sup> The cause of their crime must be sought outside of their perpetrators, who are products of multiple and fatal influences.<sup>2</sup> Such claims as these, however, violate the principles set forth earlier by Octave Feuillet, who declared that there is no such thing as natal fatality; that it is absurd to say of a rascal that he was born a rascal, or of a prostitute that she could have been nothing else!

I believe [he says in the introduction to *M. de*

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes an author must be interpreted ironically. Thus Sardou's *Rabagas* (intended as a satire on Gambetta) says of his client, whose acquittal he has obtained: "The son of an assassin father . . . and endowed by nature with evil and ferocious instincts, Bézuchard had a right to my support. Where justice denounced a murderer, I could see only a victim. The real criminal is not Bézuchard, but nature, which endowed him with beastly appetites." *Rabagas*, ii, 4.

<sup>2</sup> In *Resurrection* (i, ch. xxi), we read: "The public prosecutor declared that the laws of heredity were so far proved by science that we can not only deduce crime from heredity, but heredity from crime." And again in the same chapter: "The public prosecutor declared that Euphemia . . . was a victim of heredity. As for Máslova, he said she was illegitimate and probably carried in her the germs of criminality."

*Camors* (1867)] that the hero of this book was born to be either an upright man, or the contrary, or something between, according to the inclination that his preceptors were to impress upon his propensities and his faculties, according to environment . . . and according to the use that he himself was to make of his own, intelligent, free will.<sup>1</sup>

Of capital importance are Feuillet's last words: "Intelligent, free will." If the will is free, then the force of morbid heredity becomes negligible, and the Jean Belmonts, the Lucienne Bertrys, the Didier d'Aleins have nothing to fear. This, of course, is just what Taine, Ribot, and Zola are far from conceding.<sup>2</sup> The question involves the fundamental differences between determinism and indeterminism; between naturalism and idealism; between intellectualism and pragmatism; between rationalism and what Édouard Schuré calls inspiration, intuition, *voyance*. A solution would depend further on such factors as the dogma of original sin and the theory of the innate *bonté* of man. It would test the merits of Pascal's theory that man, in nature, is like an empire

<sup>1</sup> J.-H. Rosny declares in *L'Impérieuse Bonté*, which we looked at in the last chapter, that "the son of a bandit is not born with a fatal heritage, nor is the son of an insane man or of an imbecile. Science, by exaggerating a few insignificant truths, draws false conclusions."

<sup>2</sup> Bourget's "disciple," saturated with the depressing theories of science regarding the will, suggests a reversal of the old dictum so as to read: "Where there's a way, there's a will." *Le Disciple*, p. 114.



within an empire, surrounded on all sides by nature, but subject only to his own laws.<sup>1</sup>

In so far as the issue regards the human will, we find the two points of view set forth long ago by Corneille and Racine. The dramatic system of Corneille, based on the freedom of the will, shows man's power to overcome obstacles, to carve out his destiny as a sovereign master of his passions and his impulses. Racine, on the contrary, who demonstrates the fragility of volition, represents the will as ruled by our passions. If, therefore, these two poets had concerned themselves with heredity, they would probably have disagreed in theory. But their love of truth, their sanity and moderation, would have arrayed them both against a Dr. Bertry who, with his pose of infallibility, may drive even imaginary victims of heredity to despair. The sincere convictions of a Dr. Pascal, on the contrary, deserve respect, though we realize that they are based largely on the exaggerations of a mind lacking sense of proportion.<sup>2</sup> The conclusions of Dr. Nordau<sup>3</sup> indicate

<sup>1</sup> If I understand *La Fille Sauvage* (1902), François de Curel would emphasize the resistance of man's animal instincts to the influence of civilization. This is equivalent to stressing the force of heredity. Cf. 2d ed., pp. 56, 72.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Shaw says: "It does happen exceptionally that a practising doctor makes a contribution to science. . . . But it happens much oftener that he draws disastrous conclusions from his clinical experience, because he has no conception of scientific method, and believes, like any rustic, that the handling of evidence and statistics needs no expertness." *The Doctor's Dilemma*.

<sup>3</sup> It does not once occur to Max Nordau, in his two stout

a similar defect. Brunetière's remark, "Neither childhood nor youth can withstand the intoxication with which science at first fills its neophytes; only manhood can bear it," needs perhaps further restriction.

Naturally not all authors who satirize doctors and the arrogance of science treat particularly of heredity. It is worth while to look briefly at two or three works in which there is some other target.

The younger Bertry's outburst against "scientific superstition" in *L'Évasion* is taken up by François de Curel, a dramatist eminently qualified to deal with the conflict between science and religion. On account of his duality of mind, he has been called a "two-faced Janus," for he is at the same time mediæval and modern, a rationalist and a Catholic. In *La Nouvelle Idole* (*The New Idol*), produced in 1899, by which we are to understand Science, he portrays a physician, Dr. Donnat, whose fanatical faith in his idol leads him to sacrifice human life on a grand scale in the hope of discovering a cure for cancer.<sup>1</sup> An

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volumes on *Degeneracy*, which bristle with references to the "researches" of alienists and other men of medical science, that these celebrities might, like Dr. Bertry, be maniacs or charlatans. On the other hand, he is serenely confident that the Parnassians, the naturalists, the symbolists, the mystics, the individualists, the Wagnerians, etc., are all degenerate imbeciles.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Léon Daudet's novel, *Les Morticoles*, pt. i, ch. ii: "Qu'est-ce que ça peut faire qu'un particulier crève, si son observation éclaire un aperçu nouveau?" The medical student who attends

atheist, he is all but converted by the simple faith of one of the victims of his experiments, a girl who owes a previous cure to water from Lourdes.<sup>1</sup> But Dr. Donnat, unlike Dr. Bertry, is sincere.<sup>2</sup> Having inoculated himself with his serum as an experiment, he dies a voluntary martyr to his conviction. He has a generous heart and a great intellect; but because scientific arrogance has led his intelligence astray, he has lavished all the warmth of his belief upon an idol; and the worship of this idol has so darkened his reason that he confuses virtue and crime.<sup>3</sup> No wonder Brunetière should ask if we have attacked

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*le père Goriot* in his agony regards him merely as a scientific specimen. It is particularly in *La Messe de l'Athée* that Balzac treats the conflict between science and religion. The intoxication caused by science he stresses in *La Recherche de l'Absolu*.

<sup>1</sup> This situation has been called "le dernier coup porté à l'orgueil de l'intellectuel, du savant infatué de ses connaissances." R. Le Brun, *F. de Curel*, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> Compare, however, his wife's reproaches: "This girl was killed for your fame, in order that your statue might be paid for thirty years hence by philanthropists; in order that one of the names under the cupola of the Institute might be scratched off and replaced by yours."

<sup>3</sup> F. Veuillot, *Les Prédicateurs de la Scène*, p. 250. From a literary point of view, Lavedan's *Le Duel* (1905) is a greater drama than *La Nouvelle Idole*, but it does not emphasize the point implied in the title of Curel's play. Hardouin, the doctor in *Le Bluff* (1907), a drama by G. Thurner, has discovered a serum. Although doubting its efficacy, he endeavours to establish its reputation until, finally, his conscience revolts. In theme Thurner's play thus resembles both *La Nouvelle Idole* and Paul Adam's *Les Mouettes*.

so frequently religious superstition only to adopt another in its stead.]

A more caustic satire on the medical profession had been presented earlier by Léon Daudet in *Les Morticoles* (*The Morticoles*, 1894). The country of the Morticoles is an imaginary island, such as Lemuel Gulliver might have chanced on, where the medical hierarchy, headed by Dr. Crudanet, the grand-master and high-priest, is in control of everything. The Morticoles are maniacs and hypochondriacs who have given absolute pre-eminence to the doctors. Their faculty of medicine is at the same time a parliament and a court of justice. The only monuments are hospitals, in which everybody takes treatment. Cynical, materialistic, and atheistic, these Morticole doctors treat their patients like beasts of slaughter.<sup>1</sup> They have "opened too many bellies, removed too many brains, not to know that the soul, God, and immortality are fictions."<sup>2</sup> It was quite unnecessary for Daudet to tell us that the medical school and public monuments bear the inscription, LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY, for before reading half a dozen pages, we know what country is meant.

It has been stated that Daudet satirized the

<sup>1</sup> In *Suzanne* (1896), Léon Daudet again takes science to task.

<sup>2</sup> Broussais (1772-1838), the founder of medical cynicism, used to say: "I have dissected many brains, but I have never found a soul." Cf. E. M. Caro, *Le Matérialisme et la Science* (1868), p. 63.



medical profession because the School of Medicine refused to give him the Doctor's degree.<sup>1</sup> But Théodore de Wyzewa seems to suggest a different explanation. Asserting that medicine and doctors are here treated from precisely the same standpoint as in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, he says: "I have not yet read a novel so decidedly Tolstoyan as *Les Morticoles*."<sup>2</sup>

In *Le Mal Nécessaire* (*The Necessary Evil*, 1899), André Couvreur studies the career of a famous surgeon named Caresco—the son of an Austrian Jew—who, having established a clinic in Paris, has embraced Catholicism and steadily risen in his profession till he is an international celebrity. Despite the hostility of the Paris Medical Faculty and of most surgeons at the hospitals, Caresco is continually mentioned in the papers. His operations attract doctors from all over the world, and he is admired by young practitioners and the *ratés*. With a mania for operating and with a cynical contempt for human life, he does not hesitate to apply the knife to all who consult him, especially when in need of money for his mistress.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. Reinach, *The Athenæum*, July 4, 1896. It is also said that Malauve, the egotist so superbly satirized by Daudet in *L'Astre Noir* (1894), was no other than Victor Hugo.

<sup>2</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, June 17, 1894. Catulle Mendès calls *Les Morticoles* "un puissant, violent, épars et rudoyer roman." *L'Art au Théâtre*, ii, 165.

<sup>3</sup> To quote Bernard Shaw again: "It is simply unscientific to allege or believe that doctors do not . . . perform unnecessary



Couvreur might to advantage have made his own opinions clearer. Apparently he thinks that surgical skill is likely to be acquired at the expense of both human feeling and sincerity. This unfortunate fact, we must infer from the title, is the "necessary evil." One of the characters in the story says of Caresco's work: "It is horrible, but good has its source in evil." Caresco's assistant, indignant at his cynical suppression of life by operations producing sterility, abandons him. Dr. Domesta, an Italian charlatan in Couvreur's *La Graine* (1903), who claims to produce artificial fecundation just as Caresco produces sterility, calls him "a remarkable man but a charlatan."<sup>1</sup> And the author himself, speaking impersonally, characterizes him as "the sublime butcher, who repaired and destroyed with equal skill."<sup>2</sup>

These dramas and novels will suffice to give an idea of the attitude of recent French authors toward science, at least as manifested in medicine.<sup>3</sup>

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operations and manufacture lucrative illness." (*The Doctor's Dilemma*.) Dr. Rappas, one of Gyp's characters, charges *only* 15,000 francs for an operation. *Ces Bons Docteurs*, p. 244.

<sup>1</sup> *La Graine*, p. 120. Couvreur's charlatans are foreigners, a precaution that Brioux did not think it worth while to take.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 424. André Couvreur is a disciple of Zola, whose theories of heredity he largely shares. In *La Graine*, he speaks of "l'immensité de la route atavique."

<sup>3</sup> Usually a sympathetic doctor is present as a counterpart. Among such models are Dr. Bouret (*La Graine*), Dr. Riquenne (*Nous, les Mères*), Dr. Kervel (*Les Mouettes*, by Paul Adam), Dr. Trésal (*Un Médecin de Campagne*, by H. Bordeaux).

A Bertry, a Donnat, or a Caresco, however mistaken or insincere, can protest nevertheless in his justification that all he does is for the triumph and glory of SCIENCE.<sup>1</sup> Thus a parody of the memorable words of Madame Roland might read: "O Science, what crimes are committed in thy name!" The extravagant claims of perfectly sincere scientists after the middle of the nineteenth century and the deep disappointment when scientific hopes failed of realization, have produced the natural reaction. And so in recent French literature, even beneficent scientific works have been decried, and humiliation has been the lot of the exponents of science, particularly doctors.<sup>2</sup> Taunted, ridiculed, they suffer from the discredit of their "new idol." This reaction, as Alfred Fouillée has pointed out,<sup>3</sup> is the logical consequence of the arrogance of certain impatient scientists who, in the ardour of promising investigations, think that they have discovered the secret of the universe. Perhaps the reaction has not yet gone too far, nor even far enough. There are those who maintain that the whole world today—America as well as other countries—is still science-ridden. But, as Professor Albert Schinz has recently shown,<sup>4</sup> in discussing the renewal of

<sup>1</sup> A. Capus remarks that one of the surprising characteristics of our time is that assassination, theft, treason are committed in the name of a principle.

<sup>2</sup> Pasteur carried on "Homeric struggles" against doctors.

<sup>3</sup> *Le Mouvement Idéaliste*, p. xxxi.

<sup>4</sup> *Amer. Journal of Psychol.*, June, 1916.

French thought on the eve of the European war, there is abundant evidence that, in France at least, the tide has definitely turned. Indeed, French "traditionalists," by the irony of fate, now defend science as an ancient heritage. According to Paul Bourget, who after maintaining that its possibilities exceeded the boldest hopes of man, later declared in his disappointment that it could never explain the universe or solve the mystery of life—according to Bourget, not the Renans, the Taines, the Zolas, are the true exponents of science, but those who would confine it within its legitimate domain. For such there is no danger of being too scientific but rather of *not being scientific enough*.<sup>1</sup>

The "legitimate domain" of science! Just there is the vital question. And Bourget, no more than other French thinkers, claims to have solved it. Only recently he wrote:

Is there but one alternative left for us then—namely, that we must conceive life either mechanically or mystically; sacrifice either science or faith, either logical deduction or belief? When we try to form a synthetic estimate of the movement of French thought during the last twenty-five years, we see that its whole effort, which was often obscure, at times misguided, but ever painful, has consisted in the passionate quest of a *via media* between these two extremes.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Pages de Crit.*, ii, 195.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 312.

After all, such a middle path is not impossible, despite certain apparently insurmountable obstacles. One thing, however, is certain: no understanding is possible unless the over-confident spokesmen of science lay aside their arrogance and cease to regard the question from the perspective of their narrow domain. If, on the other hand, they return to sanity and modesty; if they renounce the pose of infallibility of a Bertry, the fanatical cult of a Donnat, and the despotic tyranny of a Crudanet, there will be scant cause for the satire of a Brieux, a Curel, or a Daudet.

## CHAPTER IX

### MARRIAGE AND THE DOWRY

*Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont* (Brieux)—*Le Prisme* (Margueritte)—*Le Sang Nouveau* (Lichtenberger).<sup>1</sup>

BRIEUX'S next play after *L'Évasion* is *Les i'rois Filles de M. Dupont*, his discussion of the dowry in French marriages. With it we come to what has been called the second period of his work, the plays of which are characterized on the whole by a more militant seriousness than those he wrote earlier. While the distinction may be insisted on too much, it is true that the comic realist of *Blanchette*, the playful humorist of *L'Engrenage*, the ironical satirist of *Les Bienfaiteurs* and *L'Évasion*, strikes now—and in the seven plays following *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont* in the main sustains—a note of deep earnestness. His concern for the social evils under consideration is now so grave as to be almost pessimistic. Whether his anxiety be justified generally, there is no doubt that the question of the dowry has long been causing un-

<sup>1</sup> "Le bien d'autrui tu ne prendras  
Qu'en mariage seulement."

PIERRE VÉBER.



easiness to the more thoughtful students of French social conditions.

Marriage for money [says Auguste Forel] is the modern form, or derivative, of marriage by purchase. Formerly one bought a wife and sold a daughter; today one is sold to a wife and buys a son-in-law. The improvement consists in the fact that the buyer and the bought are no longer in the positions of proprietor and object possessed. Nevertheless, marriage at the present day gives rise to much traffic, speculation, and exploitation that are evil.<sup>1</sup>

The date of Mammon's accession in the various countries is never recorded exactly; but it may be placed in France soon after the Revolution. Under the Old Régime, the power of money had been held in check by such influences as the pre-eminence and privileges of the priesthood, the prestige of the military profession, the titular dignity of the nobility, and court distinction.<sup>2</sup> But as a result of the Revolution, with its efforts to establish theoretical equality, these counterpoises have almost disappeared, and meanwhile money has been mounting irresistibly to the summit of the social organism.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Sexual Question*, p. 295. Cf. Bernard Shaw: "As the economic dependence of woman makes marriage a money bargain in which the man is the purchaser and the woman the purchased, there is no essential difference between a married woman and the woman of the streets." *Getting Married*.

<sup>2</sup> E. M. de Vogüé, *Heures d'Hist.*, p. 331.

<sup>3</sup> J. du Tillet writes: "Dans une démocratie anarchique comme

Though a multitude of parvenus sprang up under the Empire, who owed their wealth to the free-for-all scramble following the upheaval of 1789, it was particularly under the July Monarchy, which promoted the interests of the bourgeoisie, that new wealth developed a new field for satire. Writers of the time were not long in realizing their opportunity. Money with its power forms the backbone of Balzac's works. It plays an important part with Scribe.<sup>1</sup> Ponsard<sup>2</sup> and Barrière<sup>3</sup> give it serious thought. Sandeau, Augier, Dumas  *fils* , and Becque continued to treat the question; and subsequently it has been taken up by such dramatists as Mirbeau, Brieux, Émile Fabre, and Lucien Gleize.

There are, of course, many aspects of the question: finance proper, crooked speculation, bribery, the arrogance of the parvenu, luxury, fashionable prostitution, the dot, etc. Balzac covered about every conceivable phase of the subject. One important aspect of it has always been the dowry, which Augier—who ranks next

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est la nôtre, le pouvoir n'est qu'une fonction qui dure quelques semaines, la gloire est viagère et en butte à toutes les jalousies; l'argent est la seule 'distinction' évidente, indiscutable, comme il est la seule puissance souveraine. . . . Ce que le 'petit prince' et le 'marquis' du bon la Fontaine veulent avoir aujourd'hui, ce n'est plus des 'ambassadeurs' ou des 'pages,' c'est de l'argent encore et toujours de l'argent."

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Le Mariage d'Argent*, *Le Puff*.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Honneur et l'Argent*, *La Bourse*.

<sup>3</sup> *Les Faux Bonshommes*.

to Balzac in comprehensive treatment of the whole subject<sup>1</sup>—considered very significantly in *Ceinture Dorée* in 1855. By making the heroine of his drama find that her princely dot, instead of insuring her happiness, is an insurmountable obstacle to marriage with the only suitor she esteems, Augier attacked the generally accepted theory that the dot was always necessary. Two years later, Dumas, in *La Question d'Argent*, like Augier, emphasized the dignity of marriage without a dowry. But all efforts were powerless to check the *coureurs de dot* under the Second Empire. And so the successors of Augier and Dumas, even down to the present, have inherited the problem. The two most noteworthy contributions to the subject in recent years are Brioux's drama and *Le Prisme*, a novel by Paul and Victor Margueritte. An interesting supplement to them is *Le Sang Nouveau*, a novel by André Lichtenberger, which notes the latest evolution of the question of the dot recorded in French literature.

*Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont* (*The Three Daughters of M. Dupont*, 1897), in four acts, is doubly important—for its theme, and also because, as we have seen, it marks the beginning of a period of greater seriousness with Brioux. The play opens at the house of M. Dupont, the proprietor of a modest printing establishment in a provincial

<sup>1</sup> Cf.: *Le Gendre de M. Poirier*, *La Pierre de Touche*, *Les Lionnes Pauvres*, *La Jeunesse*, *Les Effrontés*, *Maître Guérin*, *La Contagion*, *Lions et Renards*.

city. His "three daughters" are Angèle, a courtesan of thirty-five living in Paris, but said by her father to be with her aunt in the Indies; Caroline, two years younger, a tall, ungainly spinster (like Angèle, a child by Dupont's first wife); and Julie, twenty-four, a daughter by his present wife. Caroline earns her living by painting porcelain for local merchants. Dupont, who cannot forgive her for "remaining on his hands" instead of marrying when she had a chance,<sup>1</sup> calls her "*cette grande bête de Caroline*," because of her quiet, stubborn, religious narrowness. Julie, on the contrary, is full of life, outspoken, a lover of children, and naturally not averse to matrimony. But upon hearing that a young man whom she has "had in view" is soon to be married, she realizes that her own matrimonial chances are not bright.

Unexpectedly, however, she is sought by Mairaut, a local banker, for his son, Antonin, thanks to Dupont's clever diplomacy. Pending the call of M. and Mme. Mairaut to present the formal suit, Dupont tells his family the good news. Antonin's rich bachelor uncle, Maréchal, the Prefect's assistant, will of course leave his wealth to his nephew, and the marriage will bring Dupont the

<sup>1</sup> "Because a bourgeois girl cannot earn ten cents a day," says Émile Faguet, "she has no career but marriage open to her. Consequently she is virtually forced to accept the first suitor her family presents, terrorized as she is by the kind of life she will have at home if she refuses the suitor." *Horreur des Responsabilités*, p. iii.



printing trade of the Prefecture. While hastily putting the parlour in order,<sup>1</sup> he gives Julie fifteen minutes to make up her mind.

Although Julie has danced with young Mairaut, she is scarcely acquainted with him. But her father meets her objection that she only half likes Antonin by saying that in matters of love, halfway is sufficient. Unhappy marriages most often result from love matches.<sup>2</sup> Husbands are like regular commodities: when you get a good article, you've got to pay the price.<sup>3</sup> Mme. Dupont having seconded her husband's argument, Julie accepts Antonin.

There is effective cynical comedy in the discussion between Dupont and Mme. Mairaut—the master mind of her household—over Julie's dowry. Mme. Mairaut knows what Dupont does not suspect, that her brother, Maréchal, has lost his money in the Panama bubble. Also she

<sup>1</sup> Several scenes recall Labiche's *La Poudre aux Yeux*, but Brieux's vigorous presentation of the subject gives it deep seriousness. "The necessity of appearing rich," declares Hugues Le Roux, "is never so indispensable as at the moment parents endeavour to marry off their daughters." (*Nos Filles*.) Cf. Zola's *Pot-Bouille*.

<sup>2</sup> Posdnicheff, Tolstoy's spokesman, asserts that love—real love—does not consecrate marriage, but destroys it. *Kreutzer Sonata*, ch. ii.

<sup>3</sup> Becque's notary says to Mme. Vigneron: "You must be aware that love does not exist—for my part, I have never met it. There are only business matters in this world. Marriage is a business matter like the rest. . . . If without dowries, *les jeunes filles restent . . . jeunes filles*." *Les Corbeaux*, iv, 6.



knows perfectly well about Angèle Dupont's profession. By exploiting this, she compels Dupont to add to Julie's dowry (25,000 francs down and 25,000 to be paid later) five thousand francs and a country house. The two young people, whose dispositions, tastes, and accomplishments have been greatly misrepresented, are now given a few minutes to become acquainted and approve the negotiations. Needless to say, the points at issue in the contract are settled—each side pretending to make concessions—to the satisfaction of all except Caroline, who is heartbroken upon learning her sister's engagement, but conceals her grief.<sup>1</sup>

In Act II, Antonin and Julie, who have been married about six months, are occupying their country house. Antonin's mother, greatly disappointed in both Julie and the house, lays the blame for the marriage upon her husband. Dupont, naturally, is furious over the deception about Maréchal's money. Antonin is vexed because Julie likes to read, whereas he desires only a housekeeper.<sup>2</sup> Julie, also unhappy, hopes for consolation in her children. Neither understands

<sup>1</sup> Our summary is necessarily unsatisfactory, for, as Sarcey has said: "Cette exposition est toute en détails, dont un récit succinct ne saurait donner aucune idée."

<sup>2</sup> Émile Faguet observes: "The French bourgeoisie have a cult for ignorance. They do not read. They have contempt for the savant, the man of letters, and the artist. They are quite indifferent to the scientific, literary, and artistic fame of France." *Horreur des Responsabilités*, p. 108.

the other. In a quarrel, the young wife says to Antonin: "I am not complaining about the laws, I blame French manners. The cause of our trouble is not this or that article of the Code; it is the way we were married."<sup>1</sup> She realizes that, though neither loves the other, they are chained together irrevocably.<sup>2</sup> What is more, Antonin makes her understand that he is to be her master.<sup>3</sup>

In the third act, new interests develop in an inheritance of Caroline's and the return of Angèle.

<sup>1</sup> "In France," Hélène Dugast remarks to her parents, "people marry only for money. If a girl has no dowry, she cannot find a husband." She refuses to marry the suitor her parents have chosen for her—though she does not dislike him—because she wants to know the man she marries. She berates French manners, which make it impossible for a girl to know a young man intimately without being ostracized. Hélène's mother, amazed at this new spirit, tells her that she and M. Dugast had only two interviews before their marriage; that in her time a girl abided by the choice of her parents. P. and V. Margueritte, *Femmes Nouvelles*, pt. i, ch. iv.

<sup>2</sup> In *Les Tenaïlles* (iii, 8), Paul Hervieu's heroine says to her husband: "We are chained to the same ball." Various other passages in *Les Trois Filles* recall Hervieu's play. The resemblance to his *La Loi de l'Homme*, however, is only general, for Julie has just said that she blames French manners, not the Code.

<sup>3</sup> In the France of today, a woman's influence and the importance of her domestic rôle are in inverse proportion to her social station. Among the peasantry and the labouring class, her influence is paramount: a farm prospers in proportion to the wife's ability. But the higher the social plane, the more restricted her influence becomes. What she gains in social brilliancy, she loses in domestic prestige. In the average bourgeois family, she may be called her husband's associate, whereas among the higher classes she is only a companion, occasionally an adviser. Cf. A. Capus, *Mœurs du Temps*, i, 92.

Dupont's sister having left thirty thousand francs to Angèle and Caroline each, their father seeks Caroline's share to renew his antiquated printing machinery. He hints, coaxes, and threatens; he beats about the bush, sheds tears, and appeals to Caroline's filial affection. Antonin, also, though hitherto grossly insulting to Caroline, now tries to obtain a loan from her, to ward off bankruptcy. But she lends half of her money to Courthezon, her father's employé, in the hope that he may marry her,<sup>1</sup> and promises the rest to her father.

Angèle arrives, in order to give her legal signature in the interest of Caroline, though Dupont makes Caroline believe that Angèle needs *her* signature; otherwise Caroline would refuse to see her. Angèle's quiet self-assurance makes Dupont forget the solemn, admonitory speech that he has rehearsed for a fortnight for her reception.

The old troubles, meanwhile, are far from ceasing. A new storm bursts forth between Mme. Mairaut and Dupont when, requested by her to pay the second half of Julie's dowry, he writes her an ironical order for the amount on the Maréchal succession. Worse yet, this quarrel widens the breach between the young couple, which attains its climax when Antonin says to Julie that they shall never have any children because he does not want any.

<sup>1</sup> But Caroline's hopes are shattered when she learns that Courthezon has two children by a married woman.

In the last act, Angèle comes back with Caroline from the notary's and the "three daughters" engage in a cheerless conversation. Julie wants to leave Antonin and work for her living; but Caroline, recalling her own bitter experience in disposing of her porcelain-painting, entreats her to return to her husband. Then Julie declares that, if obliged to submit to the brutality of a lover, she would prefer one of her choosing; but Angèle, speaking from her experience, disillusions Julie about the life of a courtesan. Caroline now understands Angèle and embraces her; she feels that her own faith has been selfish and narrow, that in seeking consolation in religion for her need for affection, she has found in the end only *une déception et une rancœur de plus*.<sup>1</sup> Julie understands better her differences with Antonin, so that, when he and his father come to attempt a reconciliation, she promises to be reasonable. She returns to her husband, but with the intention, despite Angèle's advice, of taking a lover.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In *Le Lys* (1908), P. Wolff and G. Leroux liken to lilies bourgeois girls without a dowry who, having begun to age and abandoned hope of marriage, conceal their despair in their hearts with a white veil. One of their "lilies" of Caroline-Dupont's age, however, in her revolt against the bourgeois dot-mania, approves her younger sister's intention of living in free love: "Va, Christine, va vers la vie, vers l'amour. J'ai payé ta rançon!"

<sup>3</sup> Brieux may have obtained his plot in part from Balzac's *Le Faiseur*. Mercadet, in financial straits, wants his daughter, Julie, to marry M. de la Brive, whom he thinks rich, that the titled son-in-law may save him from ruin. M. de la Brive, who



Such is *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont*, a play which, according to Jules Lemaître, begins as a vaudeville, continues as a drama, and ends in an apocalyptic lamentation.<sup>1</sup> The variety of impression which it produced on this one critic is suggestive of the varied impression it has made on critics in general. Not a few have objected to a certain duality in the play. That is, it ends with a tone of feminism which nobody in the first act, or even in the second, would fancy was going to be important. A. Benoist and F. Veuillot both think that reality is marred by pessimism: the one by Brieux's presentation of the "three daughters" as representative of the bourgeois family<sup>2</sup>; the other, by his treatment of Julie's marriage.<sup>3</sup> Such a marriage may be true in a particular case, but it is false when presented as typical of the lower bourgeoisie. Then those authors who stand for "le traditionalisme, le culte social de l'ordre, de la famille et de la richesse," disagree with Brieux's ideas. Such are Paul Bourget, René Bazin, Henry Bordeaux, and (recently) Paul Adam. Adam declares that the cult of love and individualism is killing the French nation.<sup>4</sup> Various authors from Molière to George

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is penniless, seeks Julie's hand because he thinks that she has a big dowry. Julie Mercadet, like Brieux's heroine, is said to be romantic and a talented musician; her suitor, like Antonin Mairaut, professes to adore music.

<sup>1</sup> *Impressions*, x, 288.

<sup>2</sup> *Théâtre d'Auj.*, i, 241.

<sup>3</sup> *Prédicateurs de la Scène*, p. 89.

<sup>4</sup> *Le Matin*, May 21, 1913.



Sand he accuses of undoing all the good work of Roman and French jurisconsults to assure the moral and material welfare of the family. He regards neither love nor any sort of "frivolous sentimentalism" as an adequate basis for marriage. Marriage is only a social institution for the benefit of the race, in which the likes and dislikes of the individual count for nothing.<sup>1</sup>

From this opinion Gustave Lanson entirely dissents. He defends Molière, who, he avers, represents "*l'esprit bourgeois et français*,"<sup>2</sup> a spirit which appears also in Brieux. In fact the reconciliation of the young couple in *Les Trois Filles* has met with general favour, critics apparently not taking seriously Julie's threat to console herself with a lover. And plenty of them have found the reality of the play unspoiled by either feminism or pessimism. J. du Tillet<sup>3</sup> and Hugues Le Roux not only approve the ending, but accept the entire last act as natural. Le Roux asserts that in France a father does not succeed in disposing of his daughter unless he adds a sum of money to the merit she may otherwise possess. Money, he declares, has become the very substance of marriage; the dot, which was originally intended as a means of facilitating the union, is now regarded by the majority of men as the object of the conjugal institution.<sup>4</sup> Finally, Claire de

<sup>1</sup> G. Chatterton-Hill, *Edinb. Rev.*, Jan., 1914.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Matin*, May 28, 1913.

<sup>3</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Oct. 16, 1897.

<sup>4</sup> *Nos Filles*, p. 20.

Pratz calls *Les Trois Filles* one of the masterpieces of modern times.<sup>1</sup>

It is not my intention to try to decide the merits of the case. I hope I have made clear by this time that my purpose is to set forth the opinions of Brieux and his contemporaries, both creative and critical, rather than to record opinions of my own. If I had, however, to express an opinion on *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont*, I should incline to the side of those who praise it. With Molière it sufficed for a young suitor to be physically attractive. The naïve love of the girls of former times was virtually pure instinct, never an act of reflection.<sup>2</sup> But conditions have changed. With her education, the modern girl will hear nothing of a master; she wants a companion.<sup>3</sup> Julie Dupont

<sup>1</sup> "Brieux and his Works," *Contemp. Rev.*, Mar., 1902. Elsewhere this critic presents the dot in a more favourable light than Brieux. "The very basis of marriage in France," she declares, "is reason. And it is usually the friends and relatives of the two contracting parties who bring them together with matrimonial intentions. Now the friends and relatives who set about this, consider, first of all, the tastes and inclinations, religious and otherwise, of the two candidates for matrimony, as well as their financial and social positions." *France from Within*, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> H. Le Roux, *Nos Filles*, ch. iv.

<sup>3</sup> Claire de Pratz writes: "It would be impossible now to educate young women, who are no longer brought up with a firm religious faith, to the ideal of self-effacement which inspired our forebears. The French girl is today educated, not at a convent, but at a State *lycée*, where, in accordance with republican convictions, she receives a strong intellectual instruction, but no religious or ethical training. All the forces of her personal character or temperament, which heretofore had been carefully

is not an exception. She, at least, is real, whatever pessimistic exaggeration there may be in other characters. Caroline seems real, too, though some critics have thought otherwise. She is consistent in her loneliness; and if the shaking of her religious faith at the end comes as a surprise, the reason is that the author had no opportunity to indicate her doubt in advance. Angèle, it must be said, he has not made so real. Her return, in the last act, from the notary's to her father's house seems only a device of the author's to complete the trinity of the sisters and strengthen his argument that at the present time a bourgeois girl, if without a dowry, has only three possibilities before her: she becomes an old maid, she goes wrong, or she makes a bad marriage.

All in all, *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont*, whether or not the "masterpiece" that Claire de Pratz has called it, is an excellent drama, despite its pessimistic tendencies. And the first act unquestionably is a masterpiece. If the dramatist does not emphasize his larger purpose sufficiently here, he makes it clear enough later on in the play. Even if pessimism does mar the last act, Brieux's strong scenes delight and amuse us, from beginning to end, and stir our emotions.

In *Le Prisme* (*The Prism*, 1904), the most important novel of recent years to treat the dowry,

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suppressed, in order to make her an unselfish, subservient creature, are now as scrupulously trained in view of developing her more assertive conscious self." *France from Within*, p. 228.

Paul and Victor Margueritte show what a wall of prejudice and stupidity, what obstacles of conventionality and argument about the dot bar woman's way to marry for love and according to the dictates of good sense. The Odyssey of Pierre Urtel, who employs his early years in quest of a big dowry that will make him an influential bourgeois enjoying selfish ease, is characteristic of many young men of our time.<sup>1</sup>

Born to parents who have consented only reluctantly to have a child, Pierre Urtel loses his father early in life, and after failing in several careers, obtains his degree in law. Though for some years his mother has concentrated all her ingenuity upon his making a good marriage, he himself is undecided which of three women, whose profiles stand out before him in the "silver" haze, he will honour with his name. Finally he chooses H  l  ne de Josserant, whose dowry is said to be three hundred thousand francs, in addition to which she will inherit a fortune from a wealthy relation. In truth her dowry is but half the stated sum, and the relation does not exist; but H  l  ne's maternal grandmother, determined that she shall make a rich marriage, represents her dowry falsely. When Pierre and H  l  ne are all but engaged, the relations on both sides must show their cards. Mme. Urtel, who possesses only one hundred and fifty thousand francs, looks particularly for aid to Pierre's wealthy aunt;

<sup>1</sup> E. Pilon, *P. et V. Margueritte*, p. 57.

but the aunt refuses because she wants him to marry for love.<sup>1</sup> This disappointment and revelations regarding the girl's dowry lead to a quarrel between Hélène's grandmother and Mme. Urtel, which breaks off the negotiations.

Pierre next pays court to the illegitimate daughter of a wealthy Cuban planter. But when the planter dies unexpectedly without legalizing the girl's status, he abandons the "chase." This leaves the last of the three, Charlotte Trapier, a very plain girl in delicate health, whose dowry scarcely equals Hélène's. But since she has a wealthy, influential uncle, Pierre's mother, fearing further disappointments, closes the bargain.

*Le Prisme* and *Les Trois Filles* expose the same shameful abuses: bartering in dowries, mutual deception in matrimonial negotiation, false reports about inheritances, and *oncles à héritage*. Both works emphasize the desire of the bourgeoisie for money and distinction, their respect for the conventionalities of society, and the pompous display of a *vie de façade*, their opinion that love should have little or no weight in matrimonial matters.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The aunt has in view for Pierre a young teacher, but his mother opposes the union because the girl works for her living.

<sup>2</sup> In *La Petite Amie* (1902), Brieux returns to the assault. When young André Logerais wants to marry a girl whose dowry is only ten thousand francs, his father thinks that a man should not marry before the age of thirty; but Logerais changes his mind as soon as he discovers a girl with a dot of one hundred thousand francs. Determined, however, to marry the girl he loves—one



There is, however, one essential difference between *Le Prisme* and Brieux's drama. It was Brieux's object to show that a bourgeois girl who has no dowry can do but one of three things; hence he naturally does not present contrasted characters to preach reform. Messrs. Margueritte, on the other hand, point the way to reform. One of their characters, a teacher, though dowerless, marries a savant, a self-made man. Then, too, Pierre's wealthy aunt (one of the authors' representatives) tries to bring about a union between him and the sister, also a teacher, of the girl who marries the savant. After reproaching his mother and Hélène's grandmother for endeavouring to unite two people without mutual inclinations, the aunt declares that marriage is the most important act in life and should be free from selfish, mercenary considerations.

Although these two works make manifest the objectionable features of the dot in French society today, we must not expect the *mariage de raison* to fall suddenly into general disfavour, for deep-rooted customs persist long after they have been rejected by public opinion.<sup>1</sup> But the ultimate

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of his father's clerks—André leaves home, and when his father attempts to starve him into submission, he and his sweetheart commit suicide. Logerais is guided by the bourgeois principle that parents must prepare their children's happiness in spite of them.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. G. Ancey, *La Dupe* (1891). Adèle Viot is compelled by her relatives to accept post-haste a husband who marries her only in order to pay his debts and carouse with her dowry.

fate of a custom rests with the younger generation, whose tastes, when pronounced, become a powerful transforming element. The new generation may compel the abandonment of an established custom by ignoring it. The attitude of the *comédie rosse* toward conventional marriage some years ago had virtually this effect. The comedy in vogue at the Théâtre Libre, finding ridicule and caustic satire ineffectual to put the bourgeois dot-marriage under the ban, professed esteem only for free love.<sup>1</sup> The violence of the *rosse* movement soon spent itself, but it served the purpose of bringing the objectionable features of conventional marriage to the attention of the rising generation. Young people found a more rational conception of courtship and marriage between the two extremes. They would base marriage on love—not in the

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Incredible is the stupidity with which this poor "dupe" clings to her *noceur*.

<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding its many objectionable features, Brieux decidedly prefers the dot-marriage to free love, though he doubtless regards the dot as the primary cause of the free union. In *Les Hannelons* (1906), he depicts a *lycée* teacher, Pierre Cottrel, who, in order to avoid marital and financial care, has formed a free union. Pierre's young companion tyrannizes him, embroils him with other people, paralyzes his work, and is finally the cause of his losing his position, after he has made heroic efforts to free himself from his yoke. One of the salient features of the play is the denunciation of Pierre's father, who has advised him not to assume the burdens of marriage. Underneath the surface humour runs a serious vein which, Bernard Shaw declares, would convince the most dissolute theatre-goer that the unfortunate hero had better have been married ten times over than to have fallen into such bondage.

frenzied, romantic sense, nor in the unwholesome free union, but love based on personal dignity, mutual esteem, and the affection of one sex for the other.

This conception of marriage does not exclude the dowry, but it makes it a matter of minor consideration.<sup>1</sup> With the dowry practically eliminated, people can marry much younger than formerly. Furthermore, if two persons are to know whether they really love each other, they must enjoy reasonably free conditions of courtship. Thus there is what may be called a new "program" for marriage: after a freer and longer courtship, a younger marriage based on personal inclination, with or without a dowry.<sup>2</sup>

These last views of the younger generation on love, marriage, and the dowry appear clearly in André Lichtenberger's novel, *Le Sang Nouveau* (*The New Blood of France*, 1914).

<sup>1</sup> Compare, however, *Le Mariage de Chiffon* (Gyp) and *Au Coin d'une Dot* (Léon de Tinseau), two novels whose authors virtually reject the dot.

<sup>2</sup> As early as 1893, Marcel Prévost announced what he termed the "krach de la dot." (*Les Demi-Vierges*, i, ch. iii.) And ten years later, as if the truth of his assertion had been questioned, he reaffirmed his standpoint (*Lettres à Françoise*, ch. xix), explaining the contrary view on the ground that young marriages were still insufficiently encouraged. Tending to confirm Marcel Prévost's argument, Émile Faguet, after noting recently the more dignified attitude of the bourgeois girl, declares that, thanks to her higher moral standard, she now insists more and more on marrying either a man she loves, or none. *Horreur des Responsabilités*, p. 117.

Dailiot, a manufacturer in urgent need of replacing his rolling stock, urges his son, Max, to marry a rich girl: "Mademoiselle de Monistrol has a dowry of three hundred thousand francs. You can get a delightful wife, do your duty to your parents and your country, and insure your own future. . . ." But Max, who has received a technical education and is an aviator, loves Claire, the daughter of their foreman. Claire is poor, but educated, serious, and dignified—qualities which Max esteems infinitely more than a dowry.

I am not a philosopher [he says]. The words *patrie*, ideal, work, appeal to me with a wife like Claire. I would willingly brave any dangers, endure any hardships, in order to have a home in which she should preside, in order to bring up children, defend my country and my faith.

Max marries Claire, and after overcoming many difficulties, is appointed director of aviation in one of the South American republics.

This spirit of the "new blood" of France gives promise of sufficient vitality to check the evil of the dot permanently.<sup>1</sup> To be sure, there still exist in society as well as in fiction such types as Gaston de la Rochelandier,<sup>2</sup> Gaston de Pres-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. Psichari, *L'Appel des Armes*, p. 76. E. Demolins says: "We want . . . young men fully determined to seek in marriage a helpmate, not a dowry." *La Supériorité des Anglo-Saxons*, p. 354, tr. by Lavigne.

<sup>2</sup> *Sacs et Parchemis* (Sandeau).

les,<sup>1</sup> and the Prince d'Aurec,<sup>2</sup> eager to regild their escutcheons, in spite of the example of Savinien de Portenduère,<sup>3</sup> Rosalie de Watteville,<sup>4</sup> or Jean de Lizardière.<sup>5</sup> But the prestige of the older selfish bourgeois of fiction like Mme. Huguet<sup>6</sup> and Logerais,<sup>7</sup> is on the wane. Young people, now accustomed to greater freedom in courtship, refuse to be their parents' dupes. Furthermore, the European war, which is proving the best matrimonial bureau France has ever had, seems destined to revolutionize French courtship and marriage; for, besides freeing girls from their mothers' apron strings, it has already demonstrated that women can compete successfully with men in industrial pursuits. These new conditions render feasible the realization of Brioux's program for the independence of women as sketched in *Suzette*<sup>8</sup> and developed in *La Femme Seule*.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Le Gendre de M. Poirier* (Augier and Sandeau).

<sup>2</sup> *Le Prince d'Aurec* (Lavedan).

<sup>3</sup> *Ursule Mirouet* (Balzac).

<sup>4</sup> *Albert Savarus* (Balzac).

<sup>5</sup> *La Lizardière* (Bornier).

<sup>6</sup> *La Jeunesse* (Augier).

<sup>7</sup> *La Petite Amie* (Brioux).

<sup>8</sup> One of M. Guadagne's daughters has, to his regret, married the son of a retired magistrate. Another is studying dramatic declamation; the third, nursing. In a quarrel with the former magistrate, who despises women that earn their living, M. Guadagne says: "Mes filles travaillent, monsieur, afin d'être indépendantes et de ne pas être contraintes un jour à épouser un polichinelle comme monsieur votre fils."

<sup>9</sup> Brioux wrote this play as a double protest: both against the disinclination of Frenchmen to marry dowerless girls, thus forcing them into economic competition with the male sex, and against the brutal attitude, in this competition, of man, who, by barring



Henceforth if such girls as Dupont's daughters are unable to make an honourable marriage, they will embrace a profession or take to some industrial vocation.

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woman's way everywhere, compels her to do his will. After the heroine's love-match fails, because her dowry has been embezzled, she is obliged to resign her position in journalism, owing to the attentions of the editor; then is forced to leave a bindery, since by forming a union of the women, she has incurred the hostility of the workmen. Must she now accept the suitor she has vowed never to marry?

Such was formerly the helpless dependence of the French working woman. But already in *Suzette* one of the Guadagne girls, representing the author's opinion, declared that these conditions were going to change—a prophetic prediction which the European war has all but fulfilled. Writing recently in *Le Journal* on the life of French women after the war, Brieux says: "L'abominable institution de la dot disparaîtra. On se mariera non plus pour *s'établir*, et à la fin de sa jeunesse, mais en pleine jeunesse, et pour vivre toute une vie, avec les risques des débuts, les luttes de la course et les joies du succès."

## CHAPTER X

### DIVORCE<sup>1</sup>

*Le Berceau* (Brieux)—*Les Surprises du Divorce* (Bisson)—*L'Empreinte* (Hermant)—*Rose et Ninette* (A. Daudet)—*Le Partage de l'Enfant* (L. Daudet)—*Un Divorce* (Bourget)—*La Maison d'Argile* (Fabre)—*Le Dédale* (Hervieu)—*Les Deux Vies* (Margueritte).

NEXT chronologically to *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont* comes *Résultat des Courses*, Brieux's play on the evils of gambling on the races. It is his most successful picture of the lower classes as they really are. If his seriousness had not made him take a too gloomy view of the situation, the play would be a masterpiece. But the evil now attacked is not so characteristically French as most of the others that excite Brieux, and therefore not so interesting for foreign readers to consider. In *Le Berceau*, however, the first of a series of plays dealing with divorce, or at least with matrimonial misunderstandings, he comes to

<sup>1</sup> A. Séché declares that the divorce question is one of the most important, if not indeed the most important, of all the questions that were brought upon the stage during the second half of the nineteenth century. *L'Évolution du Théâtre Contemp.*, p. 22.

a subject that until comparatively recently has engaged the attention of French authors far more than of English and American. This of course does not mean that marital unhappiness is more usual in France than elsewhere. Least of all countries should America, with its flagrant frequency of divorce, think so.

René Doumic remarks that some day an instructive and entertaining book will be written on the history of the divorce question in the French drama.<sup>1</sup> He might have said in the novel, too, for in this, as in other social questions, novel and drama take about equal interest. If we anticipate his history, we get, in part, the following facts:

After the slack divorce legislation of the revolutionary period, the Napoleonic Code imposed numerous restrictions. In 1816 the "Chambre Introuvable" abolished divorce. The agitation in favour of its re-establishment had its immediate source in romanticism, which glorified unbridled passion, as opposed to the conservatism and regularity of bourgeois ideals. The drama was quick to make use of the agitation. The "*femme incomprise*" and her "right to happiness"<sup>2</sup> soon became points of capital importance. By this time divorce had become a necessity, and the innocent victims, whose chains it was destined to break, made pathetic appeals to mankind. Hence

<sup>1</sup> *Deux Mondes*, Mar. 15, 1907.

<sup>2</sup> "Lorsque les femmes revendiquent le droit au bonheur, il faut entendre droit à l'amour. A. Séché.

the sympathy for those oppressed by the inhuman articles of the Code. And inasmuch as the Code attributed authority and rights chiefly to the husband, the wife became both the centre of interest and the object of sympathy, whereas the husband, her cruel oppressor, was vilified, flouted, and scorned. But there is a limit to the possibilities of the same theme, even though it have manifold variations. Thus it happened that, for the sake of variety, the dramatist generalized the situation, so that occasionally the husband dragged the conjugal chain. The Naquet Law (1884), which re-established divorce in France, took most of the wind out of the dramatist's sails.<sup>1</sup> In proportion as divorce increased and the number of "victims" decreased, he found it more and more difficult to make a case. Finally, after a period of indifference characterized by an excessive liberation from conjugal chains, the drama faced about and began a campaign against the very institution it had demanded for thirty years with such loud and persistent cries.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This law granted divorce in three cases: "(1) en cas de flagrant délit d'adultère; (2) en cas de condamnation de l'un des époux à une peine infamante; (3) en cas d'excès, sévices et injures graves, ces injures graves, sévices et excès étant laissés à l'application des tribunaux." E. Faguet, *Rev. Bleue*, Nov. 15, 1902.

<sup>2</sup> "As long as divorce did not exist, we attributed to its absence conjugal misunderstandings which in reality had their origin in the moral infirmity of husband and wife. Now that divorce exists, we realize that nothing has changed except this: tolerable unions have become execrable." J. du Tillet, *Rev. Bleue*, Mar. 17, 1900.

The literary movement in favour of divorce lasted as long as it did for the reason that the situation of an individual innocently oppressed by the regulations of society is always dramatically pathetic and never fails to appeal to our sensibility. A play against divorce—that is, in the interests of the organic unity of the family and of society—seemed formerly impossible. But the child came to the dramatist's rescue.<sup>1</sup> In the crusade against the abuses of divorce the child becomes the innocent victim. The first husband is a man worthy of sympathy and respect, whereas "the other one," even though his intentions be the best, is more or less an usurper. The wife sacrifices her child for her own happiness. It frequently turns out, however, that her position between her child and the two husbands becomes intolerable, so that she is compelled to abandon both husbands and devote herself to her child.

At first only the comic side of divorce appealed to the dramatist, that is, the awkward situation of a woman with two husbands. It is natural that he should not have realized at once the value of the child; for what the child gained, the mother lost, and in the campaign of "liberation," the wife had been represented as the victim par excellence. With the child as the centre of

<sup>1</sup> "La présence de l'enfant, voilà donc ce qui renouvelle le problème, en change du tout au tout les données, en modifie par avance les conclusions." A. Séché, *L'Évolution du Théâtre Contemp.*, p. 47.



interest, the drama assumed greater social importance and soon gave rise to a veritable bourgeois tragedy. And so the campaign of "liberation," begun by "*laourgandine de George Sand*" and continued by Dumas *fils*, Augier, Legouv  , Zola, the Margueritte brothers, and the individualists, at whose head was Ibsen, came to an end, in the drama, about 1895. The campaign of "repression," which followed it, was most heated from 1895 to 1905. The first French dramatist to consider divorce primarily from the standpoint of the child was Eug  ne Brieux, in *Le Berceau* (*The Cradle*), whose constant solicitude for the future generation we have noted from *M  nages d'Artistes* on, especially in *La Couv  e*.

In *Le Berceau*, a three-act comedy produced at the Com  die Fran  aise in 1898, the scene throughout is at the home of Laurence's parents, M. and Mme. Larsanne. Laurence, having secured a divorce from Raymond Chantrel on the ground of infidelity, has been living with her second husband, M. de Girieu, for about a year. With them is her four-year-old son, whom she idolizes but whom Girieu would send off to the *lyc  e*. Their disagreement becomes apparent when little Julien falls so dangerously ill that his father, Raymond, calls and asks for permission to stay until the crisis is passed. The attending physician deplotes the child's position and starts a discussion about divorce, quite contrary to all propriety, we must admit. He would limit

divorce to childless unions.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Laurence's mother thinks that it would be monstrous if a woman who has been basely betrayed were chained to a wretch for life, without hope of regaining her happiness. The doctor suggests pardon, declaring that the child's welfare should receive first consideration. He also hints at the heavy responsibility assumed by Laurence's father in putting her divorce through so hastily. Notwithstanding the reluctance with which the second husband gives his consent, Raymond remains constantly with Laurence at their son's bedside. Their allusions to incidents in the child's infancy, as they read the doctor's directions, make an impressive scene.<sup>2</sup>

When, in Act II, the attending Sister of Mercy speaks of Julien's parents as "*monsieur*" and "*madame*," Laurence's mother informs her that her daughter is divorced, and that consequently M. Chantrel is no longer anything to Laurence.

<sup>1</sup> Deselos, the hero of *Chacun sa Vie* (1907), a comedy by G. Guiches and P. Cheusi, says, in justification of his contemplated divorce: "If I had children, it would be my duty to reason differently; but marriage without children . . . constitutes no bond."

<sup>2</sup> At the first night, the audience saw only the humorous side of this scene, but Sarcey lauds it. "Nothing," he declares, "could be more touching, more logical, more true. The second husband (the real one according to the law) is present; but the other husband is the father. It is with the natural father that the mother discusses the doctor's prescription, and both, deeply affected by the situation, recall incidents in their child's earlier illness." *Quarante Ans de Théâtre*, viii, 68.

To this the Sister says with surprise: "No longer anything! the father! Oh, madame, when two persons are the father and the mother of the same child, is it possible for them ever to be nothing to each other?"

The parents are almost overcome with emotion when, after several days of intense anxiety, the doctor pronounces Julien out of danger. Laurence, crying "our child! our little child!" presses herself against Raymond and sobs. The second husband, who enters before she has recovered composure, forbids her to see "that man" again. Laurence says defiantly that she will consult Raymond whenever their child's welfare requires it. Girieu declares that Julien shall not come back to his house. Laurence retorts that she will not return then either, since, acting upon her father's advice, she married again in order that her child might have a protector. During a discussion of their separation between Laurence and Raymond, we learn that he tried to make honourable amends for his offence, but that Laurence, incited by her parents, returned his letters unopened. And as soon as she began to talk of divorce, the lawyers dragged their honour into the mire, sullied their name, and disclosed their family secrets with wanton insolence. Laurence regards her case as typical: she is a victim of the law made for exceptional cases which, by closing the door upon reciprocal pardon, makes so many misunderstandings permanent.

At the opening of Act III, a fortnight later, Laurence still refuses to return to Girieu. She intends to direct her boy's education until he is twelve, and then send him to his father, who has promised to take up permanent residence in Tunis. The final leave-taking of the divorced parents forms a powerful scene. After repeated protestations of affection, after swoonings and the wringing of hands, the unexpected arrival of the second husband threatens to upset everything. Girieu offers to feign to like Julien if Laurence will come back. She thanks him ironically, declaring that a reconciliation is impossible. The child alone, she goes on to say, constitutes a family. They have undertaken to found a family with the child of another man. She would like to cry out to all unhappy wives:

Do as you like if your union has remained childless. You are free to divorce and marry again: you can harm only yourselves.<sup>1</sup> But if you are mothers,

<sup>1</sup> Not thus according to Abel Hermant, who declares through one of his characters that "a woman's second husband is nothing but a first *amant*." (*L'Empreinte*, ii, 8.) "Thanks to divorce," says Jacques d'Arvant, Gustave Guiches's spokesman, "marriage has come to naught. Indeed it is worse than free love. Let us call it *la liaison bourgeoise*." *Chacun sa Vie*, iii, 4.

How different are the views of the partisans of divorce: "Just imagine the asphyxiating, poisonous influence of a home of hate! What are the chances of a child brought up by parents who detest each other? Anything is better than such a lot; the child growing up amidst its father's baseness and its mother's despair; compelled to witness undignified scenes, quarrels, and fist blows." *Les Deux Vies*, ch. iii.



you have not the right to break up the family. You will be unhappy? A child's future is well worth a mother's happiness.<sup>1</sup>

Laurence refuses to remarry her first husband, though she would see no harm in so doing, inasmuch as marriage has become a mere contract, to be broken at will.<sup>2</sup> In the final scene, Girieu charges Raymond with making the child's illness a pretext for alienating Laurence's affection from him.<sup>3</sup> The first husband asserts that he and Laurence were without blame during Julien's illness, but that when the crisis had passed, they were irresistibly drawn into each other's arms by a *revanche* of nature, which ignores the Code and the doings of magistrates.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Spencer observes that, "though the happiness or misery of the married pair is ordinarily the result chiefly contemplated, this result must be held of secondary importance in comparison with the results reached in offspring." *Prin. of Ethics*, vol. i, pt. iii, ch. ix.

<sup>2</sup> P. Masson-Forestier, a partisan of liberal divorce, defines marriage as "a contract which unites man and woman for the purpose (1) of a common, habitual life; (2) of the procreation of children." He would have divorce come under common law, the same as any business contract. *Rev. Bleue*, Dec. 29, 1900.

<sup>3</sup> This is the third time that the two husbands have met. Doumic remarks that "every drama on divorce should place the first husband and the *other one* face to face. It is the capital scene, and difficult to manage, because it requires the greatest care to keep such a situation in a serious tone." *Deux Mondes*, Mar. 15, 1907.

<sup>4</sup> "The book of nature," says É. de Saint-Auban, "differs radically from the record-book of legal acts, in that it cannot be erased at the will of the judge." *L'Idée Sociale au Théâtre*, p. 275.



Brieux has been criticised for not sticking strictly to the "cradle" after the first act. This objection is only in part justified, for the second and third acts do not exactly digress from his theme; rather they run to excessive extremes of its legitimate requirements. A reawakening of Laurence's love for her first husband is a vital part of the subject, if we are fully to realize the harmful consequences of divorce in separating parents. But a revival of their former affection does not necessarily imply the ecstasy of romantic passion. It is this excess that makes us lose sight of the "cradle." On the other hand, a discreet love-scene would not have been out of place.

✓Sarcey's praise of the piece is enthusiastic. "I scarcely recall a play," he writes, "that has ever made me weep more heartily. The first act. . . is a masterpiece." And farther on he exclaims:

There is the thesis! With what emotion it pulsates! In what tears it is bathed! How completely those misinterpret the author's conception and the fundamental idea of his drama who see only a reawakening of a divorced woman's love for her first husband. It is the cradle that constitutes the centre of the play, just as the title indicates.<sup>1</sup>

François Veuillot, after calling *Le Berceau* one of the sanest and most artistic plays that Brieux has produced, observes: "In the drama, where divorce had been the object of so much

<sup>1</sup> *Quarante Ans de Théâtre*, viii, 74.

argumentation, we had never heard such a strong, eloquent, convincing attack against the institution."<sup>1</sup> These two critics express admirably the merits of the play; for it is the sincerity of Brieux's eloquence and the emotion animating the dialogue that enable him to develop his thesis with such power.<sup>2</sup> ✓

The eight or ten other works of more or less importance on divorce show a definite evolution from the vaudeville, *Les Surprises du Divorce*, to the bourgeois tragedies, *La Maison d'Argile* and *Le Dédale*. Chronologically, however, this may not be evident, for the reason that, of two works, the one first begun is not necessarily the first finished.

Alexandre Bisson's *Les Surprises du Divorce* (*The Surprises of Divorce*, 1888) is a light vaudeville with complicated plot, shady allusions, and a parody on prearranged grounds for divorce, in the form of a slap received by the wife in the presence

<sup>1</sup> *Prédicateurs de la Scène*, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> A drama that emphasizes at least a recent occupant of the "cradle," is *Les Deux Foyers* (1910), by Gaston Auvard, an adversary of divorce when there is a child.

Solange Verteil, betrayed by her husband, flees with her little daughter, obtains a divorce, and subsequently marries a man named Bernard. But Bernard, lacking the first husband's refinement, is unable to make Solange forget Verteil, especially owing to the constant presence of her child, who resembles the father. And so, when Verteil, having returned from the colonies with tuberculosis, writes his daughter a touching letter, expressing deep regret for his faults, Solange pays him a secret visit. Upon learning the secret, Bernard bursts out in a fit of jealousy of such violence that Solange and her daughter leave him.

of witnesses. In order to get rid of his mother-in-law, a man divorces his wife and marries again, only to discover that meantime his former wife has married his new father-in-law. Here people marry and divorce just as one would engage or dismiss a servant. The spirit of the play may be inferred from the last two lines: "Marriage is a lottery, and divorce is a surprise box!" There is no mention of children.

Nor does the child receive any consideration in Abel Hermant's comedy, *L'Empreinte* (*The Imprint*, 1895). A man profoundly in love with a woman persuades her to marry him, though she does not love him. The wife soon finds other lovers.<sup>1</sup> The husband seeks compensation, and after five years of marriage forces his wife to a divorce, greatly to the scandal of her mother, who says that the women of her time had but one husband, just as did their mothers and grandmothers for centuries back. The divorced wife marries again, but the charm is broken. She soon realizes that the husband she has abandoned means everything to her, and the second one, nothing. So she comes to the conclusion that her mother was right: "*Femme d'un seul homme! Il m'a marquée à son empreinte et je n'appartiens qu'à lui.*"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> She associates preferably only with divorced persons. Émile Faguet asserts that divorce is to a certain extent a matter of fad and snobbery. *Rev. Bleue*, Sept. 14, 1901.

<sup>2</sup> On the theory of *l'empreinte* is based Léopold Lacour's chief objection to divorce, as developed in his comedy, *Le Seul Lien* (1896). Here, however, the wife remains true to her

Such a situation constitutes a veritable *impasse* if, as in this case, the first husband turns a deaf ear to his former wife's appeals.<sup>1</sup>

Alphonse Daudet strikes a more serious note in his novel *Rose et Ninette* (1891), in which, seven years before the production of *Le Berceau*, he studies the consequences of divorce when there are children. M. de Fagan, a playwright yearning for domestic peace, does not care for his wife, a vain woman of fashion, but he idolizes his two daughters, Rose and Ninette. Unfortunately he is surprised one day with his mistress. A divorce follows, the wife obtaining the custody of their children, who are permitted to spend only two days each month with him. The mother, having

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second husband, notwithstanding the passionate wooing of the first. In a certain sense, indeed, both *Le Berceau* and Hervieu's *Le Dédale* illustrate Abel Hermant's theory.

<sup>1</sup> In *Les Jacobines* (1907), a vaudeville by Abel Hermant, several couples with cross-liaisons would place divorce upon the free list. Douart, however, the character intended to represent the author, knowing that his wife has no legal grounds for divorce, insists on preserving their union. In order to make him yield, she decides to compromise her honour. The dénouement leaves the conflict unsettled. Alfred Capus satirizes the illusions of divorcés. In *Les Deux Écoles* (1902), husband and wife are divorced, then, discovering that they still love each other, they reunite. Or, again, his "angel," after returning to her first husband, still is not content. So the two husbands decide to let her try a third. (*Un Ange*, 1909.) Maurice Hennequin and Paul Bilhaud treat this theme in their vaudeville, *Heureuse* (1903). Gilberte, having obtained a divorce and married her lover, soon seeks a new liaison. A lover met by secret appointment proves to be no other than Achille, her first husband, whom she already prefers to the second.

married again, gradually alienates the girls' affection from their father who, almost insane from grief, exclaims: "Ah, divorce, that severance of the marriage bond which I welcomed as a deliverance! Why, divorce is no solution at all when the parties have children."

In this novel, Daudet does not sufficiently emphasize the evil effects of the mother's frivolity on the training of her children.

The importance of the child's welfare is more evident in Léon Daudet's *Le Partage de l'Enfant* (*Partition of the Child's Affection*, 1905.) The hero, Olivier Champdieu, whose parents have been divorced, relates everything in the first person. Like Laurence in *Le Berceau*, he will not regret his misfortunes if only they serve others as a lesson. In the opening paragraph he says:

May my contemporaries and those who come after me find in this simple, true story arms against the abominable divorce law, which threatens to destroy the French family! I shall not regret my trials if they serve to enlighten the *honnête homme*, the legislator, and the historian.<sup>1</sup>

Olivier's father is a former naval officer of traditional provincial stock. His mother, the

<sup>1</sup> Even the author of *Delphine* and *Corinne* writes: "It cannot be denied that in the Protestant States of Germany divorce is prejudicial to the sanctity of marriage. In these States people change wives and husbands as if it were merely a matter of arranging the incidents of a dramatic plot." *De l'Allemagne*, i, ch. iii.



daughter of the Parisian senator Armand-Préviç, comes from a republican family of materialists. Hence family discord, fomented by Mme. Armand-Préviç, who triumphs insolently over her son-in-law. Olivier's parents are divorced. His father becomes a distinguished explorer in Africa. His mother marries an atheistic savant, who hopes to equal the first husband's fame by discovering a cure for cancer, but fails, and after quarrelling (like his predecessor) with the redoubtable Mme. Armand-Préviç, goes to America, where he dies. Olivier's foolish mother is the real victim in the story, though he declares that parents' willingness to get divorced implies a culpable indifference to the welfare of their children. He finally has consolation for his misfortunes; for, thanks to his paternal grandmother, who is a model of nobleness, he marries a charming friend of his youth.<sup>1</sup>

The traditional faith of France, again, assumes

<sup>1</sup> *Le Partage de l'Enfant* resembles closely in theme *La Victime*, a novel by Fernand Vandérem dramatized in 1914. Lucie Tailard, who has a five-year-old son, Gégé, decides to divorce her husband. When, however, she informs her father of her intentions, he says: "From a material standpoint, your arrangements are admirable . . . but I am worried about the lamentable future of that poor little fellow [Gégé]. For his misfortune will be the price of your monstrous egotism. Divorce will make your child virtually an orphan, a *déclassé* without a home. In divorce, the real victim is the child." (Act I, sc. 6.) Gégé is, indeed, as truly a "victim" as Olivier Champdieu, for the rival efforts of his divorced parents to bribe his affection must demoralize him and develop his egotism to an alarming degree.

great importance in *Un Divorce*, a novel published by Paul Bourget in 1904 and dramatized three years later. In the opening chapter, the heroine, whose first husband has married again, has been the wife of M. Darras, a banker, for twelve years. Her grown son, Lucien, lives with them. Since they both oppose Lucien's marriage, he obtains his father's consent, which suffices.

Far more serious is a conflict of a religious nature which arises in the family. From her second marriage Mme. Darras has a daughter, Jeanne, whose preparation for communion re-awakens her own dormant faith. Darras, an atheist, though in other respects kind to them, not only opposes their religious interest but obstinately refuses his wife's request for a re-marriage by the Church after her former husband's death. Incensed at this implacable attitude, Mme. Darras and Jeanne leave home. Subsequently a reconciliation takes place which may lead to the religious ceremony. But since this will be possible only at the expense of the husband's firm conviction, Mme. Darras "cursed once more that criminal divorce law . . . a law fatal to both the family and religious life. . . ."¹ Earlier in the story, Mme. Darras had consulted the liberal-

¹ The heroine in *Constance* (1891), a novel by Théodore Bentzon, prefers to "break her heart" rather than marry a divorced man. Cf. *Déchéance* (1897), by Mme. Jeanne Dieulafoy.

Bourget tells us that Coppée was distressed and grieved over the divorce law of 1884, which must inevitable destroy vigorous, durable families. *Pages de Crit.*, i, 281.

mindèd Abbé Euvrard, who, voicing Bourget's sentiments, said:

It has not been twenty years since that detestable law was passed, yet how many tragedies I have already seen it cause! I have seen fratricidal hate between the children of the first marriage and of the second; fathers and mothers condemned by their sons and daughters; jealousy, caused by the existence of the first husband, torturing the second; or horrible struggles between the first husband and his former wife at the bedside of their child.<sup>1</sup>

If *Un Divorce* is a bourgeois tragedy, Émile Fabre's drama, *La Maison d'Argile* (*The House of Clay*, 1907) develops a conflict of still greater bitterness, owing to the part that money plays in it.

Mme. Rouchon divorces her husband, who goes to Tunis with their son, Jean, while she keeps the daughter, Valentine. Some twenty years later, at the opening of the play, she is the wife of M. Armières, an influential business man of Havre. They have a daughter, Marguerite, whose approaching marriage necessitates a large dowry; but as Armières has lost heavily on the

<sup>1</sup> Adolphe Brisson, speaking of Abbé Lemire, says: "He explained to me the deplorable influence of divorce upon the education of the children, and declared that nine times in ten the enemies of society, the most violent anarchists, are poor unbalanced persons who have been deprived of parental attention and abandoned to the bad influences of moral isolation." *Les Prophètes*, p. 249.

Stock Exchange, they will be obliged to sell their factory at a sacrifice, in order to obtain the money. At the critical moment, Valentine asserts her rights, charging her mother with neglecting her in the interests of Marguerite. Besides, Jean returns, buys the factory, and insists on deducting from the price a certain sum due him from his grandfather's estate. So after his mother has raised Marguerite's dowry and paid her second husband's debts, she has nothing left for herself. Not only do Jean and Valentine abandon her to join their father, but Armières, unwilling to witness the first husband's triumphal return, deserts his wife and accepts a position in Russia. Valentine accuses her mother of sacrificing her children for her own happiness. The same sentiment is voiced by the "reasoner," who declares:

It is perhaps absurd to say that a woman, be she a widow or divorced, who is a mother, must renounce the joys of lovers and wives; that neither the unworthiness nor even the death of her husband justifies her in repairing her happiness. Nevertheless, what if, in marrying, in assuring her own happiness, she compromise the happiness of her children?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "While I was the secretary of M. Nathan, the celebrated lawyer of Marseilles," Fabre relates, "I witnessed several legal suits which raised particularly delicate social problems. Thus I had many occasions for deploring the sad lot of children whose parents divorce or remarry." G. Sorbets, *Illustration Théâtrale*, March 30, 1907.

Thus the mother realizes that one cannot belong to two families. Fabre's "house of clay" symbolizes the modern family, which has resulted from divorce, in contrast to the family of former times, with its solidity of stone.<sup>1</sup>

In *Le Dédale* (*The Labyrinth*, 1903), Paul Hervieu gives us a more tragic conflict still. In general plot, his drama differs little from *Le Berceau*. We have again a divorced woman—her name is Marianne—who has made a second marriage, and whose affection for her first husband is revived through the illness of the child of the first marriage. Three points of difference, however, are noteworthy: Marianne's mother is uncompromisingly opposed to divorce; the second husband's dislike for Marianne's child disappears early in the play; and Marianne does not blame him for their misfortune. The wife betrays her second husband for the first upon the recovery of their child from a dangerous illness. Then she flees to her parents' home and declares herself unworthy of living again with either husband, though the second offers to pardon her. In the

<sup>1</sup> One of the sympathetic characters in Alphonse Daudet's *La Petite Paroisse* says: "Formerly, when people knew that their union was for life, they made concessions and sacrifices. Nowadays, at the first ripple, the union is declared intolerable. No indulgence, no patience. Even when our young people marry for love, they say to themselves: 'In case of trouble, the door is open.'" Marcel Prévost's heroine in *Pierre et Thérèse* would have sought a divorce, had she not regarded the marriage vow as binding through thick and thin.



conflict that follows, the divorced husband attacks the other on a precipice overhanging a torrent, and they both roll down to their destruction.

Hervieu might be accused of inconsistency in writing this play against divorce, since he had pleaded in *Les Tenailles* (1895) for divorce by mutual consent. But *Le Dédale* is not a case of mutual consent; for it is the first husband who has the separation converted into a divorce. Marianne has consented to a second marriage only reluctantly and in a spirit of revenge. Furthermore, Irène Fergan, in *Les Tenailles*, has no child at the time she seeks a divorce from her husband. The existence of a child makes all the difference in the world with Hervieu, just as with Brieux.<sup>1</sup>

After this review of works by authors opposed to divorce, in one form or another, it would be unjust to refuse the attorneys for the defence a hearing. So far as I know, no French dramatist of note has pleaded the cause of divorce since about 1895. Among the novelists of these years who favour a more liberal form of divorce may be mentioned Marcel Prévost, Paul Masson-Forestier, perhaps J. H. Rosny, and above all, Paul and Victor Margueritte, who have been the untiring standard-bearers of the movement since about 1900. After

<sup>1</sup> It is in *Les Tenailles* (ii, 9) that Hervieu alludes to divorce on the persistent demand of a single party, as it was granted during the Revolution. In the same scene, one of the characters enumerates the present legal grounds for divorce.

their *Femmes Nouvelles* (1899), and before *Le Prisme* (1905), in which they combated the shameful abuses of the dot-system and pleaded for more equity to woman in marriage and her recognition as a full co-partner, they began an unceasing campaign in favour of the "widening of divorce." Their propaganda assumed the form of pamphlets, short articles, prefaces, and bits of documentary evidence. Their most serious literary work on the subject is the novel, *Les Deux Vies* (*The Two Lives*), which appeared in 1902.<sup>1</sup>

Here we have the story of Mme. Favie and her daughter, Francine, each of whom has had an unfaithful husband. Mme. Favie has separated from hers, but her inbred horror of marriage after divorce prevents her from contracting a second union with a suitor whom she loves. Francine, after a long struggle with the injustices of the Code, is unable to get a divorce, although she has right on her side. Convinced of her "right to happiness," she flees with her child, in order to prevent it from falling into the hands of the unworthy husband, and joins her lover, in defiance of society. "It is society," she declares, "that has broken the compact." At another place, the authors liken divorce to the most urgent of necessities:

If your house were ablaze, would you refuse to ex-

<sup>1</sup> This novel was dramatized under the title of *Le Cœur et la Loi* (1905). The same authors' pamphlet, *Mariage et Divorce*, was published in 1900.

tinguish the fire for fear of spoiling the furniture? When a patient is in danger of death, does the surgeon hesitate to amputate the infected limb because the patient will be infirm?<sup>1</sup>

Just as in their petition to the Chamber of Deputies this same year, here also they favour divorce both by mutual consent and at the persistent request of one of the contracting parties.<sup>2</sup> Like Paul Masson-Forestier,<sup>3</sup> they would have divorce rapid and without publicity, in order to do away with the vexing delays and the humiliating, degrading disclosures of present procedure.<sup>4</sup>

We have noted the loud clamour for divorce until it was re-established, in 1884, and some of the

<sup>1</sup> They express this thought elsewhere: "The amputation of a limb is always deplorable; but sometimes it saves life, and often without an operation death results." *Rev. Bleue*, June 29, 1901.

<sup>2</sup> Émile Faguet is a partisan of divorce for "determined causes" and by mutual consent, but he would give only to the wife the prerogative of dissolution by single request. "Le Répudiation," *Rev. Bleue*, Nov. 15, 1902.

<sup>3</sup> Especially in *Pour une Signature* (1892).

<sup>4</sup> See *La Tourmente* (1893), ch. xii. In *Sous la Toque* (1901), a book on judicial manners by Albert Juhellé, the author's representative declares (p. 302): "In the twentieth century . . . everyone should be granted the liberty and the right to leave an unhappy union erect, through a wide door, instead of being obliged to crawl in the mire, through the shameful hole which at present leads to divorce." The partisans of "quick divorce" ought to find their ideal in Bernard Shaw, who says: "Grant divorce at the request of either party, whether the other consents or not; and admit no other ground than the request, which should be made without stating any reasons." *Getting Married* (1908).

"surprises" which resulted from the new law. That the partisans and the opponents of the law should still differ widely regarding its results, is quite comprehensible. Certain broad facts, however, are now clear. The majority of writers, while emphatically condemning the abuses of divorce, would not favour a repeal of the law. Yet the literary reaction against divorce must not be underestimated. Speaking of Dumas's disillusion, Maurice Spronck says: "A day came when he himself realized his error and understood the irremediable failure of his apostolate. . . . Facts brutally belied the prophetic affirmations of the moralist."<sup>1</sup> Alfred Capus, after favouring divorce, even when there is a child (*La Châtelaine*, 1902), writes, ten years later:

Alas! divorce leads to domestic complications which the theorists did not foresee. The most insoluble of these are the post-divorce tragedies involving the children and property rights—that is, precisely the difficulties which divorce was supposed to prevent.<sup>2</sup>

All the authors whom we have considered, except Messrs. Margueritte, may be said to oppose divorce—a few unconditionally, others when the parties have children. Even the Marguerittes realize that there are legitimate objections to the institution. Only, they regard it as a necessary evil;

<sup>1</sup> *Deux Mondes*, Apr. 1, 1898.

<sup>2</sup> *Figaro*, June 24, 1912.

and in order to mitigate the evil, they would simplify and shorten the necessary legal action.

The most serious reason by all odds yet advanced for opposing divorce is that just emphasized by Alfred Capus—the possibility of harmful consequences to the child. This possibility has in recent years added greatly to the seriousness of the question, with the increasing tendency among French men of letters to make the future generation the basis of consideration. Such a tendency denies parents' "right to happiness" and the individual's right to self-development, if this development and this happiness must be obtained at the expense of an innocent party. It rejects utterly the wanton selfishness of the romanticists and the superb egotism of the individualists.

What conclusion may we draw from the curious evolution of the drama in this question? René Doumic asks whether it is a success to be registered for traditional morality and the religious conception of marriage. Can it be said that the dramatist, taught by experience, has realized the superiority of marriage as it existed formerly, and that he now repudiates sincerely an attitude of which he repents? Shall we declare that the stage reflects faithfully the changes of public opinion, and that, after having been favourable to divorce, public opinion assumes a hostile attitude? Not necessarily, Doumic thinks: that would be exaggerating the social importance of



the drama.<sup>1</sup> As a general thing, both the drama and the novel follow rather than lead public thought, though much depends on the individual author. Dumas *fils* frequently showed himself a bold leader<sup>2</sup>; Augier was much less aggressive, as have been their successors. While Brieux cannot be said to have advocated theses disapproved by the sentiment of his time, he has had the courage to dramatize questions which seemed unpromising material. Moreover, he has done so with conspicuous success. *Le Berceau* was not the first French drama against the abuses of divorce, but it was the first drama of the kind—at least of merit—to champion the interests of the child.

<sup>1</sup> *Deux Mondes*, Mar. 15, 1907.

<sup>2</sup> In the interests of divorce legislation, he combined political and literary activity. Maurice Spronck, speaking of the law of 1884, says that Dumas expended so much energy and so swayed public opinion that he might justly have been regarded as one of its authors. *Deux Mondes*, Apr. 1, 1898.

## CHAPTER XI

### SEPARATION AND THE CHILD

*La Déserteuse* (Brieux)—*Maman Colibri* (Bataille)—*Le Bercaïl* (Bernstein)—*Les Yeux qui s'ouvrent* (Bordeaux)—*Madame Corentine* (Bazin)—*Suzette* (Brieux).

AN author concerned about the disintegrating forces which threaten marriage and the stability of the family may not content himself with treating the bare subject of divorce. After considering the more general aspects of the evil, he may amplify his original standpoint, examining individually the rights of husband, wife, and child. So Brieux has done.<sup>1</sup> *Le Berceau* was not his last word on the sanctity of the family. Not that he changes his views in later plays: he only supplements what he has already said and considers other phases of parental and filial relation.

<sup>1</sup> To realize this change in the attitude of the social drama, we need only recall Ibsen's *Norah*, the model that held undisputed sway during the period of infatuation for individualism. And just as Ibsen seems to have introduced children in his play only to emphasize the gravity of the necessity that confronts his heroine, so Jules Case, in *La Vassale* (1897), represents his heroine as a mother merely to show that nothing else matters when it is a wife's duty to seek her personal happiness.

In *La Déserteuse* he concludes that one parent, if abandoned by the other, must not marry again as long as the child remains at home. In a later play, *Suzette*, he considers the lot of a child whose parents are about to separate.<sup>1</sup>

Since these three plays—*Le Berceau*, *La Déserteuse*, and *Suzette*—are nearly related in subject, it seems best here to give up for the time our chronological method of examining Brieux's works. In point of fact, there were five plays between his first word on divorce and his second, six years later—all works of his "Storm and Stress period." With *La Déserteuse*—his return to the question of divorce—we pass to Brieux's third "period," in which the tone of his works is said to become milder and more hopeful. Real as the change is, even if not always easily apparent, there is danger of exaggerating it as a change in Brieux's own temperament. When he was most militant, violence in the French drama was a fashion. That had now spent itself and ceased to please; a change similar to Brieux's is noticeable in all the French social dramatists. Now Brieux, we have seen, never lacked independent courage in his literary ventures; at the same time his conspicuous common sense would keep him from needlessly antagonizing literary fashion. The comparative mildness and optimism of his later works are more likely due to the times than to any change in

<sup>1</sup> *Simone*, a third drama by Brieux that might be classed here, is discussed in the next chapter.

his own feelings. While he, like most men, has become more conservative with age, it is doubtful if he would have given up the *pièce de combat*, which he liked so well, if that type of play had not been frowned on of late by French theatre-managers.

*La Déserteuse* (*The Deserting Wife*, 1904), in four acts, written in collaboration with Jean Sigaux was first represented at the Odeon Theatre. Though written in collaboration, it nevertheless reveals Brieux as the guiding spirit. It is his only play, except *Bernard Palissy*, the early drama in verse, and *L'Armature* (1905), based on a novel by Paul Hervieu, which is not entirely his own.

In the first act, which takes place in Nantes, at the house of Forjot, a music-dealer, local musicians are giving an operetta, *Les Olympiens*. The composer of this masterpiece, whom all vie in calling "*maître*," has deigned to honour the *soirée* with his presence. Mme. Forjot, Gabrielle, has taken the star rôle.

Forjot, a plain bourgeois engrossed in business, is opposed to his wife's singing in public. He thinks that, instead of spending her time with an impresario, Rametty, she ought to devote herself to their daughter, Pascaline, a girl of thirteen. Owing to Mme. Forjot's sacrificing her home duties to "self-culture," Pascaline is timid in her presence, as if her mother were a stranger, though she has become greatly attached to Hélène, her governess, to whom she confides everything.

Forjot has known for some time that his wife's trips to Paris, ostensibly for the purpose of consulting a throat specialist, are only a pretext for meeting Rametty; yet rather than compromise Pascaline's future by a divorce scandal, he has said nothing. But when now the impresario urges Gabrielle to make a tour with his troupe, the crisis suddenly develops. Still vaguely conscious of her maternal and marital duties, Gabrielle at first hesitates to accept Rametty's proposals. But finally, intoxicated by her success in *Les Olympiens* and by the "master's" compliments, she refuses to listen to her husband, abandons her daughter, and elopes with the impresario.

At the opening of Act II, four years later, Forjot, who has married H  l  ne, is living in Paris. H  l  ne loves Pascaline as her own child, but the girl, incited by her mother, who has returned from a tour abroad, rewards H  l  ne's good intentions with indifference or open hostility. H  l  ne has always praised Gabrielle, so that Pascaline believes her mother's story, according to which her departure was for reasons of temperamental incompatibility. Hence Pascaline regards her mother as an innocent victim, and "that woman," her formerly beloved governess, as an usurper.

Act III introduces us to Gabrielle's theatrical "office," in which she is engaging "artists" for her next tour. Her troupe consists of two or three sorry singers; their equipment, of a couple of rickety instruments. After a violent quarrel with



her father, Pascaline comes to her mother, of whose situation she has a vague but roseate conception. Gabrielle is naturally embarrassed on account of her relations with Rametty, though she rejoices at winning Pascaline away from Hélène. The young stepmother humbly begs the "deserter" to send Pascaline back, pointing out her tender devotion to the girl. To Hélène's entreaties Gabrielle replies:

Whatever may be your merit, it is of no consequence in comparison with the fact that Pascaline is my child, a product of my flesh and blood. By marrying my husband, you have made definitive a separation contrary to natural laws. In this you were favoured by the complicity of Pascaline's father, the advantage of my conduct, and the aid of the law. But in spite of my husband, in spite of me, in spite of the judge, my daughter remains my daughter and your enemy.

In the final act, the unselfish stepmother refuses to continue the struggle. "We made a mistake," she says to Forjot. "You let the unfaithful wife go, and it was your right, but ought you to have replaced the mother?" And so Hélène informs Gabrielle that she intends to leave Forjot, in order to induce Pascaline to return. This generosity disarms the hostility of Gabrielle, who reconciles her daughter with Hélène, since, after all, she wishes to marry Rametty.

It is a difficult problem which the authors of *La Déserteuse* have presented—one more difficult

of solution than that of *Le Berceau*, since now there are four chief characters who demand almost equal attention.<sup>1</sup> For the young child of the earlier play has become a force to be reckoned with—the most problematic and disturbing element in the situation. Then, too, the husband, in filling the vacancy created by his wife's desertion, places himself in a difficult position. For, in case of differences between his child and her stepmother, he cannot remain neutral without effacing his personality. If he sides with the stepmother, his child becomes a victim of his selfishness. If, on the other hand, he does not uphold the new wife, then his second union loses its justification. A break between child and stepmother may be averted, or at least postponed, by representing the second wife as self-sacrificing. But undue abnegation on her part is improbable. Of course it is possible to make the child a docile little angel immune against its mother's intrigues. But if the dramatist paints the "deserter" entirely black, in order to prevent her harmful influence over the child, his theme loses its point. It is evident that an author who would pilot our theme through successfully must steer clear of all these dangerous reefs.

The authors have succeeded in doing so in the

<sup>1</sup> This difficulty may be what René Doumic has in mind. In attempting to explain why the play was not more successful on the stage, he says that "l'intérêt est trop dispersé." *Deux Mondes*, Nov. 15, 1904.

first act, and to a fair degree in the second also. But toward the end of the third, they sacrifice the vraisemblance of the stepmother's character, in order to prolong the action. Hélène, as a humble suppliant pleading with Gabrielle for her stepdaughter's good-will, reveals the dire necessity of supporting the thesis. And from this point the husband is obliged to assume a colourless, neutral attitude, which in the final act becomes as objectionable as Hélène's excessive humility.<sup>1</sup> Another inconsistency of the play is Gabrielle's marriage to her sorry impresario. Thanks to these concessions, the child and her deserting mother triumph. But we feel that the result scarcely justifies its sacrifices. The defects in Forjot's and Hélène's characters might have been obviated by representing him as aggressive and her as less humble, but this would have weakened the argumentative force of the thesis. The authors have succeeded in showing that even exceptionally favourable conditions do not justify one parent in replacing another who is unfaithful, while the child is still at home, only by sacrificing probability in the last two acts.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Brieux's repudiation of romanticism and the *école rosse* is here complete. Forjot has none of the traditional husband's brutality and despotic bourgeois egotism. Similarly, Rametty completely lacks the traditional lover's chivalrous bearing and his poetic disinterestedness.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Moriaud's novel, *Elle Divorça* (1894), depicts the story of two deserting wives, a mother and her daughter. Mme. Oulevet abandons her husband and daughter for her lover,

The story of another deserting wife has been dramatized by Henry Bataille under the title of *Maman Colibri* (1904). Owing to her youthful appearance, Irène de Rysbergue, a woman of thirty-eight, who has a grown son and a younger boy, might be taken for her children's sister. Not wishing to attract attention to her age at the watering-places by calling their mother simply "*maman*," her sons have added the term "*colibri*," because when playing tennis Mme. de Rysbergue looks, to the person on the opposite side of the net, like a humming-bird darting about in a cage.<sup>1</sup> She is her sons' comrade and their confidante in love matters.

M. de Rysbergue, a Belgian technical contractor, would seem to have an ideal family. The elder

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Lahrier. The father is awarded the custody of the child, Danièle, who for several years prefers him to her mother. But the daughter's affection wanes as soon as financial misfortune makes it impossible for her father to send her the usual monthly allowance. The mother, who has now "divorced" her husband and married Lahrier, succeeds in winning the daughter over to her side. Danièle marries a charming young barrister. But soon after her mother's death she, also, deserts her husband and their child, in order to become her stepfather's companion (possibly his legal wife).

M. Moriaud does not exactly champion the thesis of *La Déserteuse*, though in both of the cases he presents, we sympathize with the abandoned husband. We do not feel, however, that Danièle's future deserves her father's sacrifice in not marrying again. If the rights of the child are to appeal to us, the child must not be a Danièle Oulevet.

<sup>1</sup> Bataille's explanation of the title is not clear, since "*Maman Colibri*" would attract more attention, it seems, than plain "*Maman*."

son, Richard, in particular, adores his father. Toward his wife, M. de Rysbergue is polite and "correct." But Irène tells the old bourgeois story: her husband married her simply to have his own home. And the boys know that he has had mistresses since he was married. Richard, however, does not think any the less of him on that account, for he himself is just now liquidating a liaison before contracting a marriage. Nevertheless, he and his father have certain uncompromising principles of honour. "There is one thing," says Richard, "never to be questioned: the honour of the family."

What will result, in view of this fact, if the vivacious wife and mother, chafing at her husband's neglect, asserts her "right to happiness"? She will be obliged to flee with her lover, evidently. It is less logical that Irène's lover proves to be no other than Georget de Chambry, her sons' chum.<sup>1</sup> The "humming-bird" explains her case as a springtime of love out of season, comparable to that of birds that nest late. Richard refuses to judge his mother, but Rysbergue tells Irène, in an attitude of calm contempt, that her act of desertion, with its offence against the family and society, shall never be forgiven.

After a two years' sojourn in Algeria, where Georget performs his military service, Irène leaves her young idol, that he may love a woman of

<sup>1</sup> With the same extremes, Bataille reverses the sexes in *La Vierge Folle*.



his age. Her only desire now is to see Richard's baby and live near her children. Rysbergue, though he has not sought a divorce, refuses to have anything to do with her. But Richard receives his mother and persuades his wife to let her stay with them. Nevertheless, as the champion of the rights of the family, he cannot refrain from seeking to make his mother disavow her errors: "Between you and me, you must admit, after all, mother, that the family has its value. . . . For you are glad to come back. . . . And I suspect that the institution that you have dishonoured must now seem pure and sacred to you." These words, in the light of Richard's and M. de Rysbergue's standard of morality, show Bataille's sympathy for his heroine.<sup>1</sup> If he had been a sermonizer, we should have had a tirade against the hypocritical opposition to the sovereignty of Love.

While on this essential point Bataille and Brioux are far from agreed; while interest with Bataille centres more in the fate of the eloping wife, and with Brioux in the sanctity of the family, their conclusions are in substance the same. Brioux's "deserter," it is true, dictates her terms at the end, whereas Bataille's "humming-bird" creeps in dragging one wing. But this difference is due to the fact that Forjot marries again, so alienating the affection of his child, whereas Rysbergue, by not replacing his unfaithful wife,

<sup>1</sup> This is confirmed by later plays like *La Marche Nuptiale* and *La Vierge Folle*.

holds his children's sympathy. Considered from the standpoint of merit, whether at the time of her elopement or the time of her return, Gabrielle is not so deserving as Irène, yet she triumphs and Irène is humbled. Likewise the husbands. Apart from the matter of a second marriage, Rysbergue, with his mistresses, is nowise more deserving than the chaste Forjot; nevertheless, he wins and Forjot loses. So *Maman Colibri* confirms the thesis of *La Déserteuse*.<sup>1</sup>

While *La Déserteuse* was running at the Odeon and spectators were applauding *Maman Colibri* at the Vaudeville, Henry Bernstein brought out *Le Bercaïl* (*The Fold*), on the same subject, at the Gymnase.

Éveline Landry, with a love of things artistic, intolerably bored by the bourgeois vulgarity of her frankly inartistic husband, who is seventeen years her senior, and finding life still empty, even after the child comes that she has yearned for,<sup>2</sup> seeks consolation in the captivating com-

<sup>1</sup> Lucien Népoty goes even farther than Brieux, pointing out the complications that are apt to result from the marriage of a widow and a widower if each has children (*Les Petits*, 1912). Mme. Villaret is obliged to bear the silent reproaches of her children for replacing their father, and, drawn back and forth between two factions, she exclaims in despair: "Il va falloir que je déchire une des moitiés de moi-même." In a moment of serious reflection she tells her second husband that children have a right to be cruel and that she should have sacrificed her happiness to her children's welfare.

<sup>2</sup> Maurice Donnay's heroine says to her husband: "Je vous aurais été fidèle, je vous le jure, si vous aviez été un brave et

pany of Jacques Foucher, a novelist. When her husband, becoming jealous, requests Foucher to discontinue his visits, Éveline elopes with him, abandoning her little son without a regret.<sup>1</sup> But the two lovers quarrel. Foucher says to the "deserter": "Our trouble is due to your romantic disposition. You expect gifts which Providence does not bestow."<sup>2</sup> At the end of four years, finding intolerable her novelist's artistic life and the companions it necessitates, Éveline leaves him, informing her husband of the change. Landry in the meantime, though divorced and urged by his maiden sister, who hates Éveline, to marry again, has come to the conclusion that his wife was not entirely to blame. When he discovers her in his house visiting their child secretly, he allows her to stay.

This play we have already referred to<sup>3</sup> for its treatment of the life of artists, which, in picturing

digne homme; mais ce sont vos idées bourgeoises et mesquines . . . et votre âme vulgaire et pleutre, oui, c'est tout cela qui a créé un abîme entre nous." *Le Torrent*, iv, 4.

<sup>1</sup> When Hélène Chazel implores her lover to elope with her, he says: "You forget your child. There is no objection to taking a wife from her husband, but a mother from her son, never!" Paul Bourget, *Un Crime d'Amour* (1886), ch. vii.

<sup>2</sup> Émile Faguet diagnoses correctly the case of all women like Éveline Landry. "Nul homme," he observes, "ne peut donner à une femme la satisfaction de l'esprit romanesque, excepté un romancier et seulement par ses livres, et encore il ne fait que l'exciter et ne le satisfait point." *Flaubert*, p. 91.

<sup>3</sup> Chapter III.

the Bohemian companions of Jacques Foucher, we saw that it caricatured grossly. Apart from this exaggeration, few defects can be found in *Le Bercaïl*. A masterly scene between Landry and his old maid sister in the last act compares favourably with anything in the recent French drama. And Éveline, although her conversion is a bit overdrawn, is as lifelike as Gabrielle or Irène. Bataille's heroine does not state her regrets explicitly, because she enjoys the author's sympathy; but Éveline, sincerely repentant, pleads guilty and admits the absurdity of her romantic dreams.<sup>1</sup> Her supplications are due particularly to Landry's matrimonial negotiations, which threaten to render a reconciliation impossible. If she desired no reconciliation, she would favour his second marriage, in order to sow discord between him and their child. Gabrielle, it will be remembered, prefers to live with Rametty, after her place is taken by Hélène, but realizes the impossibility of keeping her daughter with her. All three dramatists conclude that a mother who abandons her child runs the risk of finding her place taken, and must pay dearly for her escapade, unless her husband marries again. Brieux and Bernstein consider this only justice, whereas Bataille regrets the hypocrisy which denies to the woman equal freedom with

<sup>1</sup> The profound change that has come about in Éveline recalls Augier's heroine in *Gabrielle* (1849), who exclaims in the final line: "O père de famille! ô poète! je t'aime!"

the man.<sup>1</sup> As regards the consequences of a second marriage by the abandoned father, Bernstein implies that by marrying again Landry would have incurred Éveline's enmity and probably also the hostility of their child.

Two novels, which have recently studied the question of the sanctity of the family, are even more emphatic than these dramas in asserting that parents must stifle their own misunderstandings for the sake of their children.<sup>2</sup> René Bazin's *Madame Corentine* (1893) does not discuss divorce, for that possibility does not enter into consideration with Bazin and his sturdy Catholic compatriots of Brittany.<sup>3</sup> But even with them the separation of married people is possible<sup>4</sup>; and it is particularly the heartache caused to an

<sup>1</sup> The double standard is, unfortunately, as old as civilization itself. L. Bertrand, speaking of social conditions in Numidia in the time of Saint Augustine, says: "Husbands are found claiming a right to free love for themselves, while they force their wives to conjugal fidelity. The adultery they allow themselves, they punish with death in their wives." *Saint Augustin*, pt. v.

<sup>2</sup> When Brioux's Mme. Logerais discovered that her husband was "flirting" with their clerks, "elle a eu un chagrin de tous les diables. Elle voulait quitter son mari. Si elle est restée, c'est à cause de son fils." *La Petite Amie*, ii, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Navaille, a pupil at the *lycée*, is haunted by the fear that his parents will get a divorce. *Les Grands*, by P. Véber and S. Basset.

<sup>4</sup> Technically speaking, however, separation in France now virtually amounts to divorce, since, according to a recent law, "après trois ans l'un ou l'autre époux peut demander que le jugement de séparation soit converti *de plano* en jugement de divorce." E. Stoullig, *Annales*, 1909, p. 189.



affectionate child by the separation of its parents that Bazin studies. The daughter exclaims to her father, in discussing her mother's return: "If you only knew how sad it is to love you both and always live far from one of you!" The fact that the trouble is stirred up by the husband's mother, who has never liked her daughter-in-law, introduces a peculiar element into this work.

In Henry Bordeaux's, *Les Yeux qui s'ouvrent* (*Eyes that Open*, 1907), on the other hand, the husband's mother, a woman of the noblest character, is the peacemaker, when his beautiful wife, Elisabeth, after eight years of married life, flees on account of his infidelity, with her two children, to her parents and asks the court for a legal separation. The husband's mother argues that separation and divorce are nearly always due to misunderstanding and our failure to "open our eyes" in time to the truths of life. After his reconciliation with Elisabeth, the husband writes in his diary: "In my opinion, children make a marriage indissoluble. The object of marriage is not the happiness of husband and wife. It is the founding of a family; it is the child."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lucien Descaves's comedy, *La Préférée* (1906), takes the view that very often divorce leads to disappointment for the parents and injures the future of their children. Henri Charlier, a man employed at the Colonial Office, discovers that his "favourite" daughter is not his daughter. Resolved to sue for a divorce, he places his case in the hands of Maître Monestier, who, to his surprise, does not encourage him.

When Brieux returned five years after *La Déserteuse* to the theme of divorce in its relation to children, he varied his earlier treatment of it by introducing the element conspicuous in René Bazin's *Madame Corentine*—the unwarranted influence of parents over their married children. In *Suzette*, a three-act play produced at the Vaudeville in 1909, it is the machinations of the husband's mother which threaten to break up the home of the twelve-year-old girl who gives her name to the piece.

The play opens in the provincial home of M. Chambert, a retired magistrate. Henri, a son living in Paris, and his daughter, Suzette, are expected for a visit. All idolize Suzette; but Henri's mother and old maid sister, Monique, detest the wife, Régine. Besides charging her with pride, extravagance, and religious indifference, they blame her for inducing Henri to take government contracts. Their hostility causes unpleasant scenes every time Régine visits them. M. Chambert had opposed the marriage, because Régine's father, a former seaman, was inferior in rank to a judge; but now he urges his wife and daughter to make the best of a bad bargain.

"*Charlier*: And so you are not a partisan of divorce?

"*Monestier*: Nothing more natural than that divorce should be inscribed in the Code. Marriage must not make prisoners of man and wife. But for a certain few who bless their deliverer . . . I hear murmurs of disappointment from many others."

Charlier sees his contemplated action in a new light when his legitimate daughter points out how divorce between him and her mother would affect her engagement.

There appears new reason to detest Régine when Henri arrives with Suzette, whom he has brought from boarding-school; for he accuses Régine of intimacy with another man and declares that he will seek a divorce. Mme. Chambert and Monique seize the opportunity to force the detested intruder out of the family and obtain the custody of Suzette. They paint Régine's character in the blackest colours. Henri, who admits that he has never had a will of his own, would now pardon Régine rather than air a scandal; but even his sober-minded father tells him that the unfaithful wife would commit a new offence. The Chamberts take for granted that Henri's immaculate character will afford his wife no ground for complaint. But here Régine has two surprises for them: she can prove that her husband has had a mistress; also that, in order to get inferior articles accepted, he has forged the government's O. K. stamp. On the other hand, she is in reality innocent, for, although in a fit of foolish anger she has said to her husband: "Yes, I have a lover!" such is not the case.

In Act II, which takes place at the house of Régine's father in Paris, Régine brings Suzette home from boarding-school, in order to obtain temporary custody of her daughter and so exert pressure upon the Chamberts. In the principal scene, Henri and Régine discuss their differences. She makes a sincere apology for her thoughtlessness in flirting with another man and promises

that nothing of the kind shall occur again. Nevertheless, Henri, afraid to disobey his mother and Monique, declares that pardon is impossible, though Régine's threats to expose his faults frighten him. Régine fails also in her appeal to Mme. Chambert for an amicable settlement in the name of Suzette. Armed with the authority of the law, the Chamberts take Suzette from her mother by force.

When in the last act Henri's father hears about his fraudulent business tactics, he is almost prostrated, despite the efforts of Monique and her mother to justify the use of the government stamp. Meanwhile the cynical accusations contemplated by Henri's attorney against Régine produce a revolting effect upon him. The dénouement is precipitated by the bigoted grandmother, who has employed all her ingenuity to alienate Suzette's affection from her mother; at her dictation the little girl has been obliged to write the cruelest letters to her. Unable longer to endure this persecution, Régine offers to discontinue the struggle if they will promise not to torture Suzette any more. Henri and his father, who desire a peaceful settlement, now meet Régine half way, and they soon reach a reconciliation. M. Chambert, who here speaks in the author's name, says to his wife, as he points to Suzette and her parents: "Father, Mother, and Child form a sacred Trinity. Nothing must be allowed to separate them."

Obviously the problems of *Suzette* are whether

Henri will have the courage to emancipate himself from his family's influence, and if not, whether Régine will play her two long suits against him, in order to assert her inalienable rights to her child. All depends on their consideration for Suzette.<sup>1</sup> It might be objected, then, that the play only treats with variations the subject of *Le Berceau* and *La Déserteuse*, and also that with the importance of Henri's struggle between duty to his wife and duty to his mother and sister, the play lacks unity.

Though there is validity in these objections, it may be said that the author has constructed his play out of totally new material; not a character, dramatic situation, or incident in *Suzette* recalls *Le Berceau* or *La Déserteuse*. And the two branches of the theme are at least very closely related. Besides, the question of Henri's duty towards his mother, which brings up the idea of domestic education treated in *La Couvée*, is subordinated to the question of the duty of parents towards young children. Moreover, since Brieux makes Régine worthy of the reader's sympathy, he brings out more emphatically here than in *La Déserteuse*,<sup>2</sup> where Gabrielle does not command sympathy, a mother's rights with her child. We shall see when we come to *La Robe Rouge*,<sup>3</sup> in the

<sup>1</sup> Brieux at first called this play "*La plus Forte*," so implying the decisive influence of the child, or the "link," as Strindberg expresses it.

<sup>2</sup> Act III, sc. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Act IV, sc. 6. In *La Petite Amie* (iii, 6), Brieux takes another shot at this objectionable Article of the Code.



case of a woman, Yanetta, whose husband, with some reason, wanted to take their children from her, that Brioux had already hinted at the same thesis.

*Suzette* could very well bear greater faults of structure than it does, because of its excellence in one essential quality. Just as the weakness of the characters constitutes the chief fault of *La Déserteuse*, their naturalness and originality assure *Suzette* high rank; after *La Robe Rouge*, it is Brioux's best character play. The little heroine, her cruel grandmother, and "tante Monique" are worthy to be classed with "père Rousset" in *Blanchette*. Less successful, but drawn with a trained hand, are Henri, Régine, and M. Chambert. It is rare that we find six characters so strong in one play.<sup>1</sup>

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"*Mme. Logerais*: I certainly have some right in the matter; I am the mother.

"*Logerais*: You are the mother, truly enough, but before the Law, you are of no consequence."

<sup>1</sup> A drama combining in theme *Suzette* and Hervieu's *La Loi de l'Homme* is *Son Père* (1907), by Albert Guinon and Albert Bouchinet. Mme. Orsier obtains a divorce from her unfaithful husband and the custody of their daughter, Jeanne. After completely neglecting his daughter during an eighteen years' sojourn abroad, Orsier returns and demands that Jeanne stay with him a part of the time. With indignation her mother exclaims: "Non, monsieur, non! On ne s'improviser pas tout à coup le père d'une jeune fille dont on a délaissé l'enfance!" (iv, 6). But "man's law" prevails. Jeanne, after grieving her mother deeply by her affection for her father, succeeds in reconciling the parents. Thus we infer that Mme. Orsier should not have obtained a divorce.

From the works that we have analysed dealing with the rights of the child and its conciliating influence when divorce threatens or has come, it appears that with this problem may be considered others, such as woman's alleged "right to happiness," her maternal rights, and the behaviour of parents and parents-in-law; for all these matters have a close relation to divorce and matrimonial differences.

As regards the main problem, Brieux is by all odds the child's staunchest friend and most persistent advocate. He would compel an innocent victim like Forjot to subordinate his own happiness to the welfare of his child. The celebrated phrase, "woman's right to happiness," which came into such prominence about 1890, thanks to individualism and the "poets of the North," and which was exploited by the *comédie rosse*, still finds support in Bataille.<sup>1</sup> The other authors whom we have considered, particularly Brieux, all favour what they term woman's legitimate aspirations. But there they would draw the line.<sup>2</sup> No one goes beyond Brieux in

<sup>1</sup> In works of Donnay, the Marguerittes, Capus, Coolus, and Jules Case, which it is not necessary for us to summarize, the idea also finds support.

<sup>2</sup> On matriarchism, a subject which occupies the attention of sociologists more and more, Auguste Forel says: "It is evident that in the conditions of modern civilization we cannot return to matriarchism in its primitive sense. . . . Apart from denomination in the maternal line, I mean, by matriarchism, the legal privilege of the management of the family conferred on the wife,

upholding maternal rights when the child is in dispute.<sup>1</sup> As to the meddling of parents in their married children's family affairs, it is not a new idea. Brieux and Bazin, however, give it rather a new turn by representing the grandchild as the innocent victim, and so add force to their condemnation of a person who allows his parents to break up his family.<sup>2</sup>

Nothing in all these works dealing with separation and the child is more interesting than the increasing tendency to decide the questions involved according to that general principle emphasized by Brieux from the time of *Ménages d'Artistes* (1890), that the parent is of less consequence than the offspring. This altruism will probably hold a place in literary history as one of the glories of French thought in the closing years of the nineteenth century.

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who is in reality the centre of the family." *The Sexual Question*, p. 523.

<sup>1</sup> Hervieu, in *La Loi de l'Homme* (1897), is scarcely less outspoken.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Bernstein touches on this theme in *Le Détour*.

## CHAPTER XII

### ADULTERY AND THE THEORY OF PARDON

*Simone* (Brieux)—*Un Crime d'Amour* (Bourget)—*Le Pardon* (Lemaître)—*La Petite Paroisse* (Daudet)—*La Tourmente* (Margueritte)—*L'Enigme* (Hervieu)—*Le Torrent* (Donnay)—*L'Adversaire* (Capus)—*L'Enfant Malade* (Coolus).

HAS one a right to shed blood because of a betrayal in love? This right has been proclaimed by a thousand dramas and ten thousand novels in which abandoned mistresses or enraged lovers have exacted vengeance with the applause of the public.<sup>1</sup> But an examination of both literature and facts will show that here, just as in many other social questions, opinion—at least of writers of fiction—has changed. It was only natural that sooner or later Brieux should treat the question, because of its prominence in French literature. *Simone*, produced the year before *Suzette*, is the play in which he expresses his views of the matter. Since the theme usually involves conjugal unfaithfulness—often, as in *Simone*, with consequent suffering for the child—it may profitably be considered here, immediately after our

<sup>1</sup> R. Doumic, *Deux Mondes*, Nov. 15, 1901.

study of recent French literary opinion regarding divorce.

Sixty years ago, during the period of strong reaction against romanticism, sentiment in dramatic literature was almost unanimous with regard to the action imposed upon a "deceived" husband. According to the accepted code, he had to avenge his honour.<sup>1</sup> Twenty years later, men of letters began to ask themselves whether there might not be some other solution. Quite overshadowing the other opinions expressed, came, however, the energetic and uncompromising "*Tue-la!*" of Dumas fils, which he proceeded to support with persuasive eloquence and all the authority of his prestige. But no author's efforts could stem the tide sweeping onward in glorification of illicit love. For not only romanticism, but most of the romantic and realistic fiction from George Sand to Paul Bourget and Marcel Prévost, employed every ingenious device, in order to poetize adultery and adorn it with irresistible seduction. Thanks to the infinite charm of Gallic *grivoiserie*, French authors were able to keep their readers constantly under the spell of idealized adultery.<sup>2</sup> If, then, we recall

<sup>1</sup> Instances of death for infidelity, between 1850 and 1882, are: *Diane de Lys*, *Le Mariage d'Olympe*, *L'Affaire Clémenceau*, *Froufrou*, *La Femme de Claude*, *Serge Panine*.

<sup>2</sup> So they did, too, all through the Middle Ages, after Chrétien de Troyes and other twelfth-century romancers had glorified the adulterous amours of Iseult and Guinevere. Adultery was the cornerstone of the famous mediæval institution of *amour courtois*.



the fact that love is the indispensable and ever-recurring theme, not only of the novel, but also of the drama, the influence which even purely romantic literature must eventually have on manners and public opinion, is evident.<sup>1</sup> For a reader's constant literary food, be it never so fanciful and absurd, gradually produces a certain conviction in his mind. The result of this unconscious influence became apparent by 1895, when the reading public may be said to have accepted the poetic theory of adultery as a dogma. In this year, Paul Monceaux, a prominent critic, wrote:

A compassionate wind of Evangelical indulgence is blowing in the Gallic land. Vaudeville writers, critics, and naturalistic novelists are being spectacularly converted to the religion of mercy. You need have no fear, strayed sheep: Dumas's stern command is no longer in vogue. *Après la faute, on pleure ensemble*

<sup>1</sup> René Doumic, while not attempting to justify the predominance of love in French literature, explains this predominance in fiction. "It is almost exclusively of love," he says, "that the novel treats. This fact constantly calls forth protest, since there are so many other grave things in life. . . . But from both the philosopher's and the naturalist's standpoint, love, which perpetuates life, is man's *grande affaire*. On it everything depends. . . . Hence the cries of pain, of anger, and of hate which fill books only because they are the cries of mankind tortured by love. Hence it happens that ever since novels and dramatic works have been written, they seem to have been invented only for studying the eternal problem of adultery from every conceivable point of view." *Deux Mondes*, Feb. 15, 1894.

*et l'on s'embrasse. Après la fuite, on rentre émue et rougissante aux bras du Bon Pasteur.*<sup>1</sup>

It required as many successive steps to formulate this "theory of pardon" in the drama as there are gradations between the uncompromising attitude of a Dumas and the extreme indulgence advocated by a Romain Coolus of the present day. The first "Evangelical" concession on the part of the husband was to spare the adulteress's life, while still refusing pardon. Paul Margueritte's Thérèse is permitted to live, but her husband finds pardon impossible. He would even have killed her if he had surprised her with her lover.<sup>2</sup> Jules Lemaître's Georges pardons Suzanne, but only after he has himself committed adultery.<sup>3</sup> The great obstacle to pardon thus far was naturally the husband's jealousy, which it was not in his power to overcome. But the fertile imagination that immortalized Tartarin and conceived the charming story of *Jack*, succeeded in eliminating this obstacle, thanks to an ingenious invention, so that Richard grants Lydie a complete and sincere pardon.<sup>4</sup>

Now complete pardon for past offences, with the implied liberty to form a new liaison at will, was supposed to be the goal. The exacting heroines of a Hervieu, a Donnay, a Capus, or a Jules Case would probably all content themselves

<sup>1</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Feb. 23, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> *La Tourmente* (1893).

<sup>3</sup> *Le Pardon* (1895).

<sup>4</sup> *La Petite Paroisse* (1895).

with these concessions, for the present, at least. But such champions of "woman's right to happiness" as Henry Bataille and Romain Coolus, in their eagerness to anticipate their heroines' desires recognize no particular goal. Jacques du Tillet, speaking of the compassionate husband and the wife in Coolus's *L'Enfant Malade*, says:

He not only pardons, but encourages new aspirations. . . . If he himself cannot make her happy, he will withdraw in favour of others. He offers advice and suggestions to this end. If the first lover is not perfect, a second will be found, then a third. . . . But above everything else, the dear little *enfant malade* must be happy.<sup>1</sup>

Now we may infer from certain of the defiant retorts of Julie Dupont, which voice the author's sentiments,<sup>2</sup> that Brieux can at times be an outspoken feminist. In *Maternité*, six years later, he condemns the egotism and hypocrisy of man and demands fairer play for woman. Again, after championing the inalienable natural rights of a mother (*Suzette*, 1909), he denounces the jealous tyranny of men in denying women the right of free competition in the struggle for a livelihood.<sup>3</sup> In view of this just and sympathetic attitude towards women, what will be Brieux's verdict if a man surprises his wife with her lover

<sup>1</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, May 26, 1900.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont*.

<sup>3</sup> *La Femme Seule* (1913).

in his own house? Will he think pardon better than punishment, and if so, will he find a more just reason for pardon than the woman's own happiness? This is the question in his *Simone*, produced in 1908.

M. de Sergeac and his wife have been found in a room of their château, each pierced by a bullet. The husband, Édouard, has recovered, but his memory is temporarily paralysed from the shock he has received in falling. Inasmuch as the couple have always lived happily together, nobody can explain the tragedy. But time solves the mystery. The husband's wound having healed, his father, his father-in-law, M. de Lorsy, the family physician, and a member of the bar take the matter up. A recapitulation of the facts, which develop into an intensely dramatic situation, makes an ideal exposition. Systematically questioned by the doctor, Sergeac gradually reconstitutes the gap in his memory.<sup>1</sup> He had spent the day hunting with a neighbour, a chum of his youth, who took him to the railway station. Sergeac intended to take the train for Paris, in order to bring back his little daughter. But, suspecting his friend's loyalty, he decided at the last moment to return home, where his suspicions were confirmed. In his rage, he fired upon the lovers, killing his wife.

<sup>1</sup> The laboratory experiment in Augier's *Un Beau Mariage* (1859) set the standard for such scenes. A similar situation is found in Mirbeau's *Les Mauvais Bergers* (1897). Cf. *Le Crime d'un Fils* (1905), by Maurice Lefèvre.

His attempted suicide failed. The chum escaped but took his own life shortly afterwards. When, in the chain of recollections the catastrophe is reached, the grief-stricken father-in-law wants to take Sergeac by the throat. Sergeac feels that his deed was horrible but justifiable; though had he himself been able to realize the consequences of the act to his child, he might not have fired the fatal shot. Here again Brieux makes important the innocent child's fate.

At the opening of Act II, fifteen years have passed. Sergeac has idealized his unfaithful wife to Simone, who believes that her mother met her death on a hunting-party. She is devoted to her maternal grandfather, who idolizes her but still cannot pardon Sergeac. Sergeac constantly broods over his tragedy and fears that his daughter may discover the secret. The dreaded crisis bursts forth from an unexpected quarter.

Simone is engaged to Michel Mignier, a young philosopher. Michel's father, having learned the truth about Mme. de Sergeac's death, breaks the engagement. The young woman presses her father for an explanation and draws from him the admission that he is to blame. The daughter promises to let the matter drop; but the force of circumstances is stronger than her will.<sup>1</sup> Hav-

<sup>1</sup> As Simone's questions approach their climax, they become a torturing ordeal for her father. Henry Bernstein, who excels in inquisitorial dialogue, has given the model in *Le Voleur* and *Israël*. We find a similar scene in *L'Obstacle* (Daudet), *Le Pardon* (Lemaître), *Pierre et Thérèse* (Prévost), and *L'Énigme* (Hervieu).



ing succeeded in wresting the secret from a faithful old servant, Simone resolves to leave her father, whose blood-stained hands she abhors. Quite forgetting their former spirit of comradeship, she reproaches him for wrecking her life. Even after the intervention of her fiancé, who purposes to keep the engagement in spite of his father's opposition, Simone still refuses to yield. Finally, however, when her father, on his knees, implores her to pardon him, she relents, and with the approval of M. de Lorsy, rushes into his arms.

The play is not without technical faults. Simone's change of attitude—first in condemning her father, then in pardoning his crime—seems abrupt, if not forced and unnatural. Without making the play too long, three or four more scenes would have given greater consistency to the heroine's character. The desirability of such a lengthening is implied by Paul Flat, who calls the problem of the third act a "*donnée de roman*." A novelist, with unlimited space at his disposal, could have blended the transitions leading up to the dénouement so cleverly as to have made their objectionable features imperceptible. A hint here and there in Act II would have facilitated this by preparing us for the heroine's subsequent caprices.

After all, Simone's inconsistency lies not so much in her obstinate refusal to pardon her father as in her initial abandonment of their cordial relations for hostility. Scarcely one young woman

in a thousand, after fifteen years of perfect fellowship with her father, would turn upon him suddenly for the reasons which cause Simone to turn, especially since her love for Michel is only too obviously manufactured for the occasion. The real reason for Simone's disconcerting attitude must be sought in the requirements of the theme. Critics have complimented the author on what they term his abandonment, in *Simone*, of his didactic tendencies. But in reality the thesis causes as great mischief in this play as in any other, unless it be *Les Avariés*. Or perhaps we should say that in no other play by Brieux is the chief defect due more directly to didactic necessity. Paul Flat's comment is eminently just:

A first act of a soberness and a dramatic vigour not yet shown by the author in any other work. A second act in delicate shades and tints of human feeling, but already drifting near the danger line towards the end. A third which on the whole moved in a direction contrary to the sentiment of the audience, because of its harshness.<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding its faults, *Simone* is a drama of great power. The undulating richness of its style is admirably suited to a psychological theme. Nothing else that the author has produced equals its broad, humane spirit. Brieux's conclusion: "A murder is a murder, and the time will come when none will be excused," does not advocate

<sup>1</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Apr. 25, 1908.

the pardon of an unfaithful wife, but it distinctly denies her husband the right to take her life. Commenting on his drama in the *Matin*, the author reasons:

For a husband to kill his wife for caressing another man, is a remnant of savagery. In by-gone ages, when the male regarded his companion as his property, such an act of violence may have seemed justifiable; but in our enlightened age, it is only the deed of a madman wounded in his vanity. Dumas's famous cry, *Kill her!* is out of harmony with our ideals, for we have made progress toward compassion. We have more respect for human life than had the generation which preceded us.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to these general humanitarian reasons for respecting life, we have seen that Brioux emphasizes here again, as a particular and more weighty reason, the child's welfare, that one always so near his heart. It was while reading the celebrated preface to *La Femme de Claude*, he tells us, that he conceived the idea of *Simone*—the preface in which Dumas fils, addressing an upright, faithful husband fettered to a perverse, adulterous wife (the divorce law had not yet been passed), advises the drastic punishment already noted. In meditating over this advice, Brioux, as we might expect, said to himself: "Yes, but even so . . . if there is a child, what will become of it? What will be its attitude later?"

<sup>1</sup> G. Sorbets, *Illustration Théâtrale*, May 16, 1908.

Just this is the point; nothing else should be of such importance in restraining the blind fury of an enraged husband or wife.<sup>1</sup> This is the final argument; Brieux alone of French dramatists and novelists accords to this essential feature of the theme the consideration that it deserves.

Our summary of *Simone* shows its relation to the cycle of dramas and novels which establish the "pardon theory." René Doumic considers this theory a remnant of French romanticism, which has returned to native soil as one element of the Russian novel.<sup>2</sup> Brieux would add yet the influence of the War of 1870 and socialism.<sup>3</sup> Alphonse Séché points out still another influence, feminism, which, he thinks, will reject "pardon," for the reason that it has never conceded to the husband the right to judge his wife's conduct.<sup>4</sup> Then, too, a tendency to depoeitize adultery—perhaps a natural concomitant of the growing tolerance for it—has helped make pardon possible. This tendency, which has been very pronounced with

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bourget's *La Terre Promise* (1892). Ohnet, a staunch advocate of the pistol (*Serge Panine*, 1882), counsels restraint when there is a child's future at stake. His representative in *Le Droit de l'Enfant* (1893), speaking of wife-murder, says: "In every catastrophe of this kind there is involved not only the wronged husband, but a household, a family. In reality it is the innocent parties who receive the blows."

<sup>2</sup> *Deux Mondes*, Feb. 15, 1894.

<sup>3</sup> G. Sorbets, *Illustration Théâtrale*, May 16, 1908.

<sup>4</sup> *L'Évolution du Théâtre Contempor.*, p. 15. The equality of the sexes in adultery was formulated by Dumas in *Francillon* (1887).

certain authors—especially dramatists—during the past thirty years, has stripped the *amant* of his prestige and all but effaced the ridicule and odium attaching to the husband. Before a husband could pardon, his jealousy had to be disarmed; and this was impossible as long as the wife's lover retained his romantic halo of glory.

The first literary work of merit to repudiate Dumas was *Un Crime d'Amour* (*A Love Tragedy*, 1886), by Paul Bourget.<sup>1</sup> The hero, Alfred Chazel, a brilliant engineer, is not loved by his wife, Hélène, for notwithstanding his good intentions, he is one of those men who never understand women. Hélène takes as a lover her husband's former classmate and chum, Armand, who, however, abandons her when she urges him to elope. Her disillusion, followed by a dangerous illness, results in her moral regeneration and a firm resolve to devote herself henceforth to her child and husband. The "crime" that the author has in mind is not the wife's infidelity, but "the moral assassination of a woman who has had faith in her lover."

Upon Alfred's first suspicion of his wife's in-

<sup>1</sup> Becque, it seems, foresaw this evolution. For while his *Michel Pauper* (1871) is a protest against unchastity, in *La Parisienne* (1886), Clotilde, with the tacit consent of her husband, puts adultery on a semi-commercial basis in keeping with her egotistic convenience. Of course Becque's satire often is overcharged with pessimism; but French literature since his time has continued to develop the duality implied in these two dramas.



fidelity, he told Armand that if such a thing should ever occur, he would take his son and let H  l  ne begin life anew: "What contempt I have for a husband who seeks vengeance! Either he does not love his wife (and what does he avenge?) or else he loves, and ought to make the woman whom he loves happy, at the expense of his own happiness."<sup>1</sup> Alfred impresses us as too unsuspecting and generous. Besides, the author keeps him so much in obscurity at the psychological moment that it is thanks to H  l  ne's repentance that all ends well. Even so, if Armand had loved H  l  ne more, everything might have been different.<sup>2</sup>

The new Evangelism found another apostle in Jules Lema  tre, whose drama, *Le Pardon* (1895), furnished at the same time a name for the movement.<sup>3</sup> According to the simple plot of the play, when Georges learns that Suzanne has a lover, they separate and the guilty wife goes to the home

<sup>1</sup> *Un Crime d'Amour*, ch. vi.

<sup>2</sup> The pardon of adultery is sanctioned, if not emphatically advocated, by Maupassant, in his short story *Allouma* (1889). Auballe, after sowing his wild oats, settles in Algeria, where Allouma, a beautiful Arab woman, becomes his companion. Impelled by her nomad instinct, Allouma occasionally returns to her tribe for a few weeks. Auballe grants her this permission, after her first escapade, and pardons her each time upon her return. Even after she has run away with his shepherd, he intimates that he would still take her back; for, "avec les femmes," he says, "il faut toujours pardonner . . . ou ignorer."

<sup>3</sup> It is possible, as certain critics have pointed out, that this piece should be taken ironically.

of her friend, Thérèse, to whom Georges has formerly paid court. Thérèse soon persuades Georges to let Suzanne come back, inasmuch as her "fault" is mild. But the offended husband finds it easier to promise forgiveness than to forget, so he forms a liaison with Thérèse. Now the offended wife prepares to leave her husband. But Thérèse, who sincerely regrets the wrong she has done Suzanne, apologizes, and Suzanne forgives her. Husband and wife can now grant each other a lasting pardon.

It might be objected that a "pardon" thus based on extenuating circumstances and special conditions loses its force. This is true of Daudet's *La Petite Paroisse* (*The Little Parish Chapel*, 1895), whose mystic and romantic elements relieve the author of personal responsibility.<sup>1</sup> After eight years of marriage, Lydie Fénigan elopes with a young nobleman, twenty years her junior. They contemplate a cruise on his yacht, but the elopement soon loses its fascination for the young lover, who returns alone. His abandoned companion lands on the west coast of France, where she attempts suicide. Her mother-in-law, who despised her at the time of her elopement and whose tyranny had been Lydie's chief grievance, now flies to her rescue, saves her life, and urges her son, Richard, to pardon her.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The dramatized version of this work was produced in 1901.

<sup>2</sup> Similar in general plot is *La Brebis Égarée* (1913), a play by Francis Jammes. A poet of the Basque country elopes with

Richard had felt the blow keenly, for he had recently grown fond of his wife. But could he ever think of pardoning her? The same influence that had turned his mother to forgiveness now turned him. This was Napoléon Méricet and his church, the *Petite Paroisse*, which he had erected in memory of his wife, whom he pardoned after she had run away with an artist. Méricet reasons and pleads with Richard, explaining his own case. "It was the merest chance," he says, "that a mad fit of pride did not make me the basest of assassins; for is there anything so base as a husband who kills his wife with the authorization of the law?" Fortunately Méricet's good curé counselled moderation; and now that he understands the gospel of forgiveness, he rejects Dumas's advice with horror: "Oh, it's easy enough for that dramatist to formulate his high-sounding theatrical advice, 'Kill the faithless woman!'" This argument all but convinces Richard. But when it comes to the test, he does not find pardon so easy as he has anticipated. Not until his young rival has met death and the offended husband has become convinced that Lydie sincerely detests her lover's memory, does the last obstacle disappear.<sup>1</sup>

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his friend's wife. They go into Spain, where Pierre unchivalrously abandons his lady when her money has run out. After a dangerous illness, the "strayed sheep" is glad to return to the fold.

<sup>1</sup> Daudet weaves in the story of a man sentenced to death for killing his mistress for infidelity. Méricet remarks that he

The pardon in Daudet's novel depends largely on mysticism, as in Jules Lemaître's drama it depends on exceptional circumstances. But in *La Tourmente* (*The Tempest*, 1893), Paul Margueritte did not see fit to avail himself of such concessions.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps for that reason he comes to the conclusion that so-called pardon, if not impossible, may be of little or no value. Jacques Halluys, in considering whether his wife, Thérèse, could be in love with his old student friend, Philippe, is inclined to think that, even if such is the case, he will not kill her. "Only certain mad brutes would kill an unfaithful wife, certain blood-thirsty wretches, perhaps, who think they can wash their disgrace away in blood."<sup>2</sup> But when Thérèse confesses illicit relations with Philippe, Jacques would kill her if only he had a knife. Though he is persuaded by the advice of one or two friends to pardon Thérèse and resume his former affectionate life with her, he keeps thinking of Philippe in spite of himself. A resolute stand at the beginning and a definite break would have been better than the constant little pricking of his wounds from day to day. So Jacques's pardon results in his torture—a state of mind which the author portrays admirably, though by making

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would have been acquitted if it had been his lawful wife, though the crime would have been the more base because committed with legal impunity.

<sup>1</sup> The stage version of this novel bears the title *L'Autre*.

<sup>2</sup> *La Tourmente*, ch. vi.



Jacques reason too much with himself, he produces at times the impression of a *comédie larmoyante*. But Paul Margueritte here, as everywhere else, presents his subject with fairness. If Jacques's efforts to pardon and forget fail, the novel tells of other cases of pardon which succeeded completely.

Paul Hervieu, the staunch champion of woman's rights (in the broad sense of the term), treats our theme in *L'Énigme* (*The Enigma*, 1901). When Léonore's lover commits suicide in the hope of shielding her, she screams to her husband: "It is all up, Gérard; strangle me!" But in perfect composure Gérard replies: "No, I will not kill you. Nor will I drive you from home. You shall live as a punishment." So this "cruel" husband considers death too merciful for an unfaithful wife. The "reasoner" condemns conjugal homicide unreservedly. In his opinion, punishment should be inflicted according to the gravity of the offence: "Smiles, embraces, and caresses cannot, like poisoning or parricide, be expiated in the blood of those who have yielded only to voluptuousness."

Similarly the "reasoner" in *Paraître* (1906), one of Maurice Donnay's dramas, hopes that "before nineteen hundred more years love will have been reduced to its just proportions." He asserts that the man who has just killed his wife's lover was prompted by the fear of appearing to be a complacent husband. And like Brieux in discussing *Simone*, he points out the consequences



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of such a murder to the other parties concerned. But here no child's future is involved. In *Le Torrent* (1899), an earlier play intended to establish the sovereign rights of Love, Donnay represents an "odious" husband who drives his wife from home for adultery. The "innocent victim" throws herself into a mill-race, leaving two young children.

Still another husband deserves censure who refuses to pardon through his inability to forget—Maurice Darlay, the young barrister in *L'Adversaire* (*The Adversary*, 1903), a drama by Alfred Capus. Marianne, formerly a model of virtue, though impatient for her husband to rise into prominence at all costs, owes her corruption to the baneful influence of Mme. Béautin's salon, where she has formed a liaison with another lawyer. Maurice, who pleads only cases which he approves of morally, is naturally firm towards Marianne; for he has won fame by obtaining the acquittal of a man charged with wounding his wife and her lover. So, in rejecting her plea for indulgence, he says: "I am not one of those complacent husbands of the present time who, with smiles on their lips, pardon every day! It would be useless for me to try."

Capus would have us understand that this unhappy ending, which stands almost alone in his dramas, is exceptional; that pardon is coming to be more and more the rule. For when Maurice asks his spokesman, Chantraine, whether there will

not develop a race of exceedingly civilized people indifferent to conjugal infidelity, Chantaine says: "I am firmly convinced that people will attach to it less and less importance."

The drama par excellence advocating woman's "right to happiness" is Romain Coolus's *L'Enfant Malade* (*The Sick Child*, 1897), of which we have already heard Jacques du Tillet express his opinion. Jean lets a woman persuade him to marry her because, she declares, she would be unhappy with any one else. The obliging husband not only respects his wife's every whim, but anticipates her desires and assists in arranging her next choice. And as soon as the dear creature has again become unhappy, Jean takes her back; for to him she is "*une petite enfant malade qui a besoin d'être gâtée, aimée avec des gestes de douceur et des regards de bonté.*"<sup>1</sup> The play has every appearance of a satire, but Romain Coolus's general tendency seems to refute such a supposition. Nothing could be more serious than one of his more recent dramas, *Cœur à Cœur* (1907), in which he takes essentially the same view.

These summaries, while showing a certain diversity of sentiment relative to conjugal infidelity, justify the conclusion that the general tendency in recent French literature has been towards leniency. Since liaisons have become so confusedly similar to the legal union, the same may be inferred from them, except that the penalty

<sup>1</sup> *L'Enfant Malade*, ii, 4.

for taking the life of one's mistress is greater than the penalty for wife-murder. The revolver reaction against romanticism begun by Dumas *filz* and Émile Augier, who were themselves far from consistent, has lost much of its initial severity, thanks to the Russian novel and to such *isms* as pessimism, individualism, feminism, cosmopolitanism, and humanitarianism.<sup>1</sup> Though some "deceived" husbands and lovers still exact the offender's life as a penalty, far more pardon, or at least spare life.<sup>2</sup> Indeed it is doubtful whether a single case of wife-murder has been recorded since *Simone* (1908), either in the drama or in the novel. As early as 1898 Georges Pellissier wrote: "Our novelists no longer dare to represent a husband who kills his wife."<sup>3</sup> And according to Maître Aga,<sup>4</sup> it is now customary to spare the lover's life also.

<sup>1</sup> H. Bidou observes: "Il ne semble pas douteux que, depuis dix ans, notre théâtre ne se soit extrêmement adouci. On y a très peu tué cette année." *L'Année Dram. 1911-1912*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> M. de Rysbergue says: "I am not a man who kills his wife," though he refuses to see Irène when she returns to the fold. *Maman Colibri*.

<sup>3</sup> *Études de Litt. Contemp.*, ii, p. 104. The reason for "pardon" is sometimes selfishness (*La Parisienne*, *Le Foyer*, *L'Homme de Proie*). But oftener the husband admits his share of fault (*Le Pardon*, *Le Bercaïl*, *La Griffe*, *Cher Maître*, *Le Goût du Vice*, *Un Soir*). François de Curel's savant (*La Figurante*) endures his dishonour stoically because he realizes that at his age he should not have taken a young wife: "That woman is nothing to me. In marrying her I made a mistake. To take her life because I have made a mess of mine, would be an abuse of power which is not in keeping with my ideas."

<sup>4</sup> *La Maison des Juges* (1907), by G. Leroux.

Such are the facts of French society, according to literary theory. But does literary theory represent the facts of life? In the novel evidently it does not; nor is the drama a trustworthy guide, owing to its gross exaggeration of the frequency of adultery.

*Simone* represents the fundamental difference between literary opinion and fact. Sergeac kills his unfaithful wife, to the profound regret of the dramatist, who pleads for clemency in the name of reason and civilized humanity. Here we have an actual deed, so to speak, and an expression of literary theory. The dramatist registers the deed with a protest and urges reform. But literary theories and protests change manners only gradually. And so, while Brieux's attitude is in direct contrast to Dumas's, the offended husband has not changed his course of action, though a marked difference is noticeable in his subsequent attitude. For in *Simone*, the husband feels that his tragedy is horrible and sincerely regrets that it was necessary, whereas in *La Femme de Claude*, the husband's wrath remained implacable. So far, fact and fiction agree; but this partial success of literary theory does not justify the reign of "pardon" in recent French fiction, for, according to statistics, enraged husbands, lovers, and mistresses still have recourse to the revolver.

Rather has literary influence, in a certain sense, defeated its purpose and led to violence, since, by creating a sentiment opposed to legal action in



adultery, it has forced the offended husband to avenge his honour by violence. At the present time it is impossible for a husband, not only of the higher classes, but even of the middle class, to bring his wife before a tribunal on the charge of adultery, in accordance with Articles 336 and 337 of the Code. There is a feeling that a wife should not sit in the dock with her lover, no matter how gravely she may have offended her husband.<sup>1</sup> The natural consequence is such an increase in the large number of "unselfish" homicides, as murders for other motives than money are called, that they are five times as numerous as the selfish ones.<sup>2</sup> For here public opinion and the jury both favour the husband who has taken justice into his own hands. The Code, too, is emphatically on the husband's side, since Article 324 gives him the right to kill his wife and her "accomplice" if he surprises them in his own house.<sup>3</sup> Jacques Lux says that, owing to moral skepticism tempered by outbursts of indignation, public opinion and justice, despite the clement tone of French manners, consider two things equally permissible:

<sup>1</sup> L. Delzons, "La Législation Pénale de l'Adultère," *Rev. Bleue*, Mar. 12, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Toulouse, "L'Homicide Désintéressé," *Rev. Bleue*, Mar. 1, 1903.

<sup>3</sup> It is perhaps an exaggeration to say that the Code legalizes wife-murder. According to A. Séché's interpretation of this Article (*L'Évolution du Théâtre Contemp.*, p. 12), it merely means that murder, committed by the husband under these circumstances, is excusable.



The wife is free to violate the conjugal oath, and her accomplice is in nowise reprehensible; but the murder of these two persons, committed by the dishonoured husband, is, if not legitimate, at least excusable.<sup>1</sup> The same critic concludes that, while adulterers should be severely punished, on the other hand, their lives ought to be protected by the prospect of due punishment for the assassin husband. The difficulty is to decide what constitutes due punishment. Lux's own suggestion of a heavy fine rather than imprisonment is far from satisfactory. It means virtually putting a price on human life.

<sup>1</sup> "La Liberté de l'Adultère et du Meurtre," *Rev. Bleue*, Apr. 25, 1908.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE FRENCH MAGISTRACY

*La Robe Rouge* (Brieux)—*L'Enquête* (Henriot)—*La Loi de Pardon* (Landay)—*La Maison des Juges* (Leroux)—*Angoisses de Juge* (Masson-Forestier)—*Robes Rouges* (Adam)—*Le Lac Noir* (Bordeaux).

THE four dramas dealing with matrimonial troubles, we know, did not come in unbroken sequence. *Suzette*, the last of the series, followed immediately after *Simone*, the third. But between the second and the third, Brieux wrote three others; and between *Le Berceau* and *La Déserteuse* came the majority of the "Storm and Stress" plays—no less than five of the eight, in which Brieux seems to believe that the best way to bring about reform is not to cheer by holding out hope, but to terrify by depicting awfulness. Only two of these—*Les Remplaçantes* and *Les Avariés*, both completed in the same year—are at all related in subject. Following the cynicism of *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont*, the bestial misery of *Résultat des Courses*, the hopeless *impasse* of

*Le Berceau*, these plays form a grim series of gloomy and angry denunciation. The last two—*La Petite Amie* and *Maternité*—however interesting in themselves, are not so distinctive in theme as to warrant our considering them at length. In plays already or to be considered, Brieux discusses more or less the problems he treats in these two. The other three—*La Robe Rouge*, *Les Remplaçantes*, *Les Avariés*—which we shall now take up in order, deserve rather detailed attention, because the problems in them are for the most part peculiarly their own.

*La Robe Rouge* (1900) takes its name from the fact that the official robe of a French presiding judge, or *conseiller*, is a red gown. The story is of a struggle between an alleged assassin and the local magistracy, in which the prisoner's life is in the greater peril because the prosecuting attorney desires his conviction, in order to obtain the coveted rank of judge. The grave charges implied in this summary may at first seem absurdly exaggerated. But in these times when all things are attacked indiscriminately, some exaggeration is to be expected. Perhaps we shall discover that it is not so very great after all in *La Robe Rouge*, if we take a rapid survey of the attitude of French literature towards the magistracy in the past.

A century before Saint Louis decided disputes in his open-air court, Chrétien de Troyes depicted the woes of a girl unable to get justice even in the

realm of good King Arthur.<sup>1</sup> Jean de Meung, a contemporary of Saint Louis, says in *Le Roman de la Rose*:

“Judges, in short, are scoundrels vile.

. . . . .

’Tis not for us these men to crown  
With state, that they may trample down  
Suitors, and every cause exploit  
To fill their purses by adroit  
Chicanery, and shut their door  
To claimants cursed in being poor.”

In the fifteenth century, the *Pathelin* farce satirizes a brainless judge who, after repeatedly rejecting the plaintiff’s just claims, stops the proceedings abruptly, in order to go to dinner. Guillaume Coquillart’s judge is too stupid to have an opinion. Vacillating, *bon enfant*, he knows just enough to charge fees.<sup>2</sup> In the sixteenth century, Rabelais naturally does not mince matters. His “furred cats” devour little children and feed from marble stones. Their long, steel-pointed claws are so strong that nothing escapes them. They burn, quarter, murder, imprison, spoil, and waste everything. Our good curate of Meudon would like to have them all burnt alive in their “burrows.”<sup>3</sup> Remy Belleau’s ire gradually spends itself good-naturedly:

<sup>1</sup> *Yvain*.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Playdoyé d’entre la Simple et la Rusée* (fifteenth century).

<sup>3</sup> *Pantagruel*, Bk. v, ch. xi.

*"J'ai bien connu que la Faveur  
Est le rempart d'un bon plaideur."*<sup>1</sup>

But Agrippa d'Aubigné's wrath knows no bounds. His "Golden Chamber" (1616), in which Injustice has its throne, is a structure built with bones and skulls of the victims of iniquitous judgments. The sepulchral walls are whitewashed with the victims' marrow.<sup>2</sup>

In view of the tight rein kept by the Grand Monarque in the second half of the seventeenth century, his men of letters ventured only a feeble echo of their convictions. Indeed how could the magistracy be held to account in literature after the high-handed examples of Richelieu<sup>3</sup> and of Louis XIV himself?<sup>4</sup> Scapin, after hinting at the influence of money and protection, says: "Give everything you have rather than try to obtain justice. Consider through how many beasts' talons you must pass!"<sup>5</sup> La Fontaine's

<sup>1</sup> *La Reconnue*, v, 3.

<sup>2</sup> The Huguenot standard-bearer, whose father was a judge, lays the blame for these iniquities upon the Catholic royalty and clergy.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Alfred de Vigny, *Cinq-Mars*. Before the Revolution French criminal law was based on the Ordinance of 1670, which authorized torture, and was in general unfavourable to the accused. The diversity of judicial standards may be seen from the fact that in the former provinces of *langue d'oïl* alone, where the *droit coutumier* prevailed, there were over three hundred different *coutumes*. Jalliffier and Vast, *Hist. de l'Europe de 1610 à 1789*, p. 721.

<sup>4</sup> The case of Fouquet. *The Man in the Iron Mask*.

<sup>5</sup> *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, ii, 8. In *Le Misanthrope*, Philinte



representative of the law thinks that one could not make a mistake by condemning a "*pervers*" hit or miss.<sup>1</sup> Racine's judge, in his mania for routine, would regulate even the conditions of sleep by legal decree.<sup>2</sup> In another instance Racine represents a "pleader" as reminding a judge that he is a distant relative of one of the judge's nephews.<sup>3</sup> La Bruyère both hints at the corrupt influence of women in judicial matters and plays on the difference between a judge's "duty" and his "trade." After satirizing the interminable delays of justice and censuring the flagrant incompetency of young magistrates, he exclaims: "There is a school to train people for war: where is the school for magistrates?"<sup>4</sup>

The noisy champions of enlightenment and reason in the eighteenth century did not directly concern themselves much with the magistracy. Moreover, in spite of the unbridled reign of debauchery during the Regency, the literary censor-

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says to Alceste: "Aucun juge par vous, ne sera visité?" thus alluding to the custom of trying personal influence with the judiciary. Charles Sorel, after speaking of "the greedy hands of Justice," describes a judge whose wife obtains a decision in favour of the litigator offering the last and biggest bribe. (*Francion*, Bks. I, III.) Cf. Beaumarchais's experience a century later. Pigault-Lebrun's magistrates are willing to invent legal facts. *Charles et Caroline*, iii, 9.

<sup>1</sup> *Fables*, Bk. II, no. iii. Cf. his fable *L'Huître et les Plaideurs*.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Plaideurs*, i, 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, v, 9. Compare the sentiments expressed by Racine in his preface.

<sup>4</sup> *Caractères*, chs. vii, xiv.

ship, which prevented free discussion, held undisputed sway until 1750. Voltaire's scathing attacks, after all, were directed against the penal system and the general spirit of fanaticism that caused magistrates to commit deeds of cruelty rather than against the magistrates themselves.<sup>1</sup> Beaumarchais's mordant satire, on the other hand was personal, being based on his own experience and his blows produced a much deadlier effect relatively—that is, considering his limited prestige—than did Voltaire's. That the judiciary was still held in esteem, is evident from Sébastien Mercier's humanitarian judge, who possesses all of the known virtues—probity, integrity, honour, conscientiousness, and justice. He thought himself obliged to seek his office for fear of losing the opportunity of doing as much good as possible for his fellow-creatures.<sup>2</sup> We should suspect that Mercier's model judge was intended only as a contrast, if he were accompanied by an unworthy colleague, which is the situation in Marie-Joseph Chénier's drama, *Jean Calas*.<sup>3</sup> Here the upright

<sup>1</sup> Vauvenargues declared that the sole business of justice was to maintain the laws of violence.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Juge*, i, 2. Nivelles de La Chaussée's judge almost despoils himself in the interest of integrity and honour. His son, even more rigid still in matters of justice, would hold magistrates responsible for any loss that might result to a litigant from an error on their part. But he admits that his views are exceptional:

"Ma façon de penser, contraire aux mœurs du tems,  
N'attirera sur moi que des ris insultans."

*La Gouvernante*, iii, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Mercier presents such a case in *L'Indigent*.

La Salle's motto is: "Everything for conscience and truth."<sup>1</sup> He condemns his harsh, cruel colleague, Clérac, and the latter's kind in these words: "Thus the magistrate, who has bought his office, thinking that he would humiliate himself by being conscientious, buys and sells the right to appear infallible."<sup>2</sup> In the second half of the eighteenth century, the tendency among the "philosophers" was more and more to attribute all faults to society, all virtues to the individual. Naturally, therefore, the representatives of society—that is, the magistracy—were assumed to be in the wrong. Even La Harpe made his strictures.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the reforms of 1789, respect for judges was not increased. The magistracy created by the Revolution was reorganized under the Consulate, and again under the Empire.<sup>4</sup> In their attitude towards the judiciary, the Restoration, the July Monarchy, the Second Republic, and the Second Empire all imposed an oath of allegiance, which in many cases was equivalent to dismissal.<sup>5</sup> Thus the course of events, by frequently compelling magistrates either to disavow a previous régime or to resign, placed them in an unfavourable position and did much to undermine their prestige.

<sup>1</sup> *Jean Calas*, i, 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, iii, 4. The origin of judicial bribes, or "spices," is discussed by Raymond Poincaré. *How France Is Governed*, p. 233.

<sup>3</sup> *Cours de Litt.*, Didier ed., 1834, ii, 637.

<sup>4</sup> M. Glasson, *Rev. Bleue*, Nov. 4, 1882.

<sup>5</sup> A. Rambaud, *Hist. de la Civ. contemp. en France*, p. 344.

Balzac, the Saint-Simon of the July Monarchy, represents the *gens de robe* as "prevaricators, who . . . seek only to please the mighty." In his *Cabinet des Antiques*, the honourable gentlemen intrigue, accept bribes, and render *quid pro quo* to the government.<sup>1</sup> The magistrates in *Ursule Mirouet*, except Bongrand, are skinflints willing to sell out to the highest bidder. If we except Popinot, those in *L'Interdiction* and *Le Colonel Chabert* are not much better.<sup>2</sup>

The *gens de robe* of the Second Empire enjoyed a certain esteem, except of course with the avowed enemies of the government. But under the Third Republic their lot has not been enviable. Journalists, critics, novelists, moralists, and dramatists—all have vied with one another in their efforts to discredit them. Each one wants to deliver a blow, add to the satire, enrich the common stock of invectives. Some years ago, Maître Payssonié, an advocate-general of the appellate court of Orléans, said in an address to his colleagues: "It is raining excrement, and we are under the eaves." Then he enumerated some of the titles of articles against

<sup>1</sup> Camusot, a provincial examining magistrate, who is promised the favour of the King and of the Minister if he will clear a certain man, accepts the proposition and receives for his services an appointment in Paris (p. 168). In this traffic he is ably seconded by his wife (p. 153). Another magistrate owes his promotion to his servility (p. 138). Again, the *procureur du roi* takes his cue from the Minister (p. 146). Sometimes a magistrate accepts a bribe in the street (p. 140).

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted, however, that Balzac's characterizations are overdrawn. Cf. Jules Simon, *Victor Cousin*, 4th ed., p. 87.



them: "The Great Prostitute," "The Magistracy Capitulated in Servile Submission," "The Magistracy Rotten to the Core," "The Crimes of the Magistracy," etc.<sup>1</sup> Among the epithets quoted by him are: "*salariés*," "*brutes immondes*," "*scélérats*," "*association de malfaiteurs*."<sup>2</sup> Such excesses constitute one of the joys of a free press. But we must confess our surprise upon reading the following estimate in a serious work by a reputable author.

Is this contemptible, prevaricating magistracy qualified [Georges Deherme asks] to pass sentence, to inflict capital punishment? Have these disreputable judges, who intrigued in the Humbert case and cooed in the corrupt Steinheil salon, the necessary dignity for arbiters of justice? What are their decisions worth, if we suspect that they are rendered to order or for bribes?<sup>3</sup>

Criticisms like these, being directed squarely against the magistracy, are a far graver charge than the tirades of a François Coppée or a Paul Margueritte, which are directed chiefly against society and the Code. Flaubert, Anatole France, Pierre Loti may, like Tolstoy, scoff at all human

<sup>1</sup> *Rev. de Paris*, Oct. 15, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* The same year in which *La Robe Rouge* was brought out upon the boards, Augustin Filon called attention to the exceedingly bad reputation of the French magistracy in fiction. Indeed the epithets he enumerates belong in the same class as those just quoted. *Rev. Bleue*, May 19, 1890.

<sup>3</sup> *La Crise Sociale* (1910), p. 224.



justice<sup>1</sup>; Édouard Rod and Gaston Leroux may emphasize the uncertainty, the fallibility of justice; or a Labiche, a Courteline, a Bisson may amuse us with their light caricatures of the magistracy. Such arguments and criticisms, while they have weight, are not necessarily convincing.<sup>2</sup> With the serious drama, it is different, if we may believe Tocqueville. "When the revolution," he says, "which has changed the social and political status of a people, begins to make itself felt in literature, it is generally through the drama that this revolution manifests itself first, and that is the *genre* in which it always remains perceptible."<sup>3</sup> If, then, the chorus of fault-finding voices of the other *genres* is joined by the ominous note of a powerful drama like *La Robe Rouge*, we may infer that it is time for the judiciary to clean house. Such is unequivocally Brieux's opinion.

2 Mauléon, the seat of a third-class judicial district near the Spanish border, is in disfavour at the

<sup>1</sup> Dostoevski and Tolstoy took the standpoint that the judge did not have the right to judge his fellow-men. The author of *Resurrection* based his argument on a literal interpretation of the Scriptures.

<sup>2</sup> Victor Hugo, it will be remembered, puts the galley-slave above the judge and describes pathetically "a convict's last day." He incarnated in Laffemas, who was intended to personify the magistracy (*Marion Delorme*), all that was odious and detestable. At the date of *Les Châtiments* (1852), his wrath had not cooled in the least.

<sup>3</sup> Contrary to Tocqueville, critics usually hold that dramatic literature lags behind the novel; but this conservative tendency makes its diagnosis the more trustworthy.

Ministry of Justice because of its low percentage of capital convictions. But Vagret, the prosecuting attorney of the place, after repeated disappointment over the preferment of younger and less deserving colleagues, will at last be able to don the "red robe," if he can find and convict the author of a murder just committed in the district. The theory of the first examining magistrate having broken down, Vagret gives the case to Mouzon, who guarantees the arrest of the assassin within three days. And Mouzon finds his man in Etchepare, a Basque peasant, who owed the aged victim of the crime a life annuity and who was financially embarrassed at the time.

Etchepare pleads not guilty, declaring that he was at home the night of the murder, but his neighbours refute him with hearsay and circumstantial evidence. The poor fellow, confused and intimidated, abandons his first line of defence for another, only to contradict himself more than before. Taking advantage of this, Mouzon pleads with him, threatens him, and resorts to all the insidious ruses known to the strategy of the cross-examiner, trying finally to wrest a confession from the prisoner in the name of his children. But Etchepare, still protesting his innocence, exclaims: "If I am not guilty, must I nevertheless say that I am guilty?"<sup>1</sup> Even his court record (*casier judiciaire*), from which Mouzon expected important

<sup>1</sup> This scene (ii, 7) is the best in the play. Brioux shows the same dramatic power in Act I of *Simone*.

results—which in fact gave him the “material certainty” of the prisoner’s guilt—even this fails to produce the desired effect, though it does show that the peasant has been fined several times for disorderly conduct. Mouzon has Etchepare taken back to his cell and then proceeds to examine the wife, Yanetta. Her court record reveals a liaison with her employer’s son, whom she shielded in larceny when she was a girl working in Paris, but attests her exemplary conduct as a wife and mother since her marriage to Etchepare, who knows nothing of her “fault.” Yanetta beseeches Mouzon not to reveal this, for fear that her husband will take her children from her and drive her from home. She is made to believe that Etchepare will virtually be set free if he confesses, so in the next scene, persuaded of his guilt, she urges him to do so. Mouzon tries to confound each with the other’s testimony. But once more convinced of her husband’s innocence, Yanetta loudly defies the magistrate and refuses to sign her deposition, whereupon Mouzon places her under arrest as an accomplice.

The brilliant attorney for the defence brings the jury to tears, in a pathetic appeal, and seems to clinch a verdict of acquittal; but Vagret’s speech sways both jury and audience in the opposite direction, making a conviction certain.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Emotional oratory is now rare before the French bar. The persuasive eloquence of a Berryer, a Jules Favre, a Gambetta made a powerful appeal to the heart and the conscience, to the

Then near the end of his triumph, to the astonishment of all, he suddenly requests an intermission. Grave doubts about the defendant's guilt having arisen in his mind, Vagret wants to consult the Presiding Judge and the Attorney General, who has just come to Mauléon on official business, before sealing the prisoner's fate.<sup>1</sup> All crowd around the victorious attorney to congratulate him. But when the Attorney General and the Presiding Judge learn of Vagret's "stupid intention"—that is, his resolve to communicate his doubts to the jury—they turn from him in contempt and anger, since their sole concern is to avoid a technical error, which would go down on record against them. They consider such an error infinitely more lamentable than the conviction of an innocent person. Undeterred by this attitude, Vagret explains his doubts to the jury, notwithstanding his wife's efforts to calm his scruples of conscience, and in spite of his own profound

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judge's sense of justice and the jury's sense of pity. As late as about 1850 judicial pleading, larded with philosophy, sentiment, and the tearful pathos of the preceding century, was still based largely on natural equity. But by the end of the nineteenth century, these ornaments had all been discarded, leaving only a plain exposition of the facts. (E. Pouillet, "La Plaidoirie dans la Langue fr.," *Rev. Bleue*, May 22, 1897.) Nowadays, according to Raymond Poincaré, an eloquent advocate indulges in oratory only when his cause needs it, that is, scarcely one time in a hundred. *Ibid.*, July 6, 1907.

<sup>1</sup> Similar instances are mentioned in *Sous la Toque*, a novel on judicial manners by A. Juhellé.



regret at seeing the *robe rouge*<sup>1</sup> slip from his grasp. The Presiding Judge, who is in great fear of missing his train, receives the verdict of acquittal with complete indifference; but Vagret is pleased, although he knows that Mouzon has been appointed *conseiller*, thanks to the political influence of his Gascon friend, Mondoubleau, the representative in Parliament from their district.

Etchepare's situation is expressed in his words to the court clerk: "I am acquitted, but my life is ruined." For, since Mouzon has disclosed Yanetta's secret to him, all happiness is lost. The wife pleads imploringly for pardon, but Etchepare, as a true Basque, repudiates her. He and his mother will emigrate with his children to South America, for his neighbours have not only maligned and slandered them since his arrest, but have caused them irreparable financial loss.

So the cynical Mouzon alone triumphs—Mouzon, "*ce juge ambitieux, complaisant aux politiciens, oublieux de ses devoirs, entêté dans ses partis pris*,"<sup>2</sup> who excels in collecting postage stamps and carousing with low women. A conclusion here would have been natural, but Brioux preferred to send his audience home satisfied by letting Yanetta plunge a dagger through the

<sup>1</sup> In order to obliterate even the official costumes of the Old Régime, the Constituent Assembly abolished the red robe of the judiciary in 1790. (A. Casenave, *Les Tribunaux civ. de Paris pend. la Rév.*, i, p. xl.) The time-honoured colour was restored under the First Empire.

<sup>2</sup> F. Veuillot, *Les Prédicateurs de la Scène*, p. 159.



unscrupulous flatterer's heart. Thus the only act of justice in this drama on the magistracy is the assassination of a judge.

✓ It is impossible of course in a summary to make clear the technical excellences of a play. No other from Brioux's pen so skilfully interweaves so many important elements in an artistic whole as *La Robe Rouge*. The dramatic action develops the question of Etchepare's fate, which in turn depends on the final triumph of Mouzon's ambition or Vagret's conscience. The trial serves to place side by side in striking contrast an intriguing magistrate, who by political wire-pulling overcomes all obstacles to his promotion, and a conscientious magistrate to whom—and to whose wife—the red robe is very dear, but who disdains it at the price of his professional honour. The author himself shows equal artistic conscience in dispensing with what are usually regarded as dramatic essentials—the love element in the plot (an innovation which succeeds so brilliantly that the dramatic interest does not lag for a moment), elaborate scenic effects, and comedy to relieve his seriousness. He limits dramatic accessories to manners and the development of characters, again with brilliant success. In no play of Brioux's are the people more alive than here. If one is to be distinguished above the others in the generally excellent picture of provincial manners, it is the unscrupulous, hypocritical examining judge, Mouzon. H. Pradalès does not exaggerate when he

says: "*Il n'est pas de peinture plus nette, plus énergique que celle de cet égoïste.*"<sup>1</sup>

The exposition, too, is remarkably successful. Brieux foreshadows all the points to be developed in the play, and thanks to his spokesman, La Bouzule, an elderly judge, we can distinguish two groups of magistrates, the old school and the new—an alignment which points to the probable result by arraying Vagret and Mouzon in different camps.

La Bouzule, now on the verge of retirement and hence at liberty to unburden his conscience, ascribes the ills of the magistracy to "the fever for advancement," which, he says, causes many a magistrate, who would not modify his decision for money, to be subservient to an influential elector, a deputy, or a cabinet minister with favours and offices at his disposal. This malady, the "reasoner" goes on to say, can be traced to universal suffrage, which he calls "the god and tyrant of the magistracy." If we add the tendency of the "powers that be" to measure a court of justice by its number of convictions, we see the magistrate's goal and what he deems the best way of reaching it; also his moral weakness and its cause. Given his sincere feeling—which he imbibes from the Code—that an accused person is assumed to be guilty until proved innocent, we understand his inclination to regard witnesses for the defence as deliberate falsifiers, whenever

<sup>1</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Dec. 14, 1901.

their testimony tends to disprove his preconceived theory. Now if we add to this explanation of the attitude of the French magistracy in general, the motives (already set forth) of the characters of the play and the particular situation in which they find themselves—all, be it remembered, brought out by the exposition, it is easy to see how well Brieux understands Dumas's famous "*art des préparations*," and how in *La Robe Rouge*, which is essentially a *pièce à idées*, he combines thought with perfect structure of plot.<sup>1</sup>

It is no wonder that the play was acclaimed by literary critics as one of the greatest in the recent drama—a verdict sustained by the French Academy, which very properly crowned the work. But the *gens de robe*, naturally, were less enthusiastic. A. Desjardins, of the French Supreme Court, declares that *La Robe Rouge* is the cleverest, most complete and systematic attack ever directed against the French magistracy by dramatic literature. He congratulates the author on his "malice which leaves nothing to be desired," but asserts that Brieux's conception of the magistracy is based on exceptional cases. Far more severe is Octave Tixier, who speaks contemptuously of Brieux's "ridiculous and odious marionettes" and accuses him of gross ignorance of judicial matters.<sup>2</sup> An-

<sup>1</sup> Additional matters brought out are: the insufficient salaries of magistrates and their reluctance to live in the smaller provincial cities; the presumption of the press to decide the merits of a judicial case, and the influence exerted upon the Department of Justice by this meddling.

<sup>2</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Oct. 1, 1904.

other critic advances the opinion that *La Robe Rouge* is not directed against the magistracy at all, but only against the law.<sup>1</sup> Finally, Maître Jules Borde, a prominent member of the French bar, produces conclusive evidence to show that the play is a satire on both the magistracy and the law. He denies, however, that the author did wrong in composing the work, to which he justly concedes great social significance.<sup>2</sup> In almost every case, he comes to the conclusion that Brieux's criticisms are just, even if, sometimes necessarily, severe. The most specific of these criticisms are addressed in part to the magistracy, in part to the Code and the judicial organism. Sometimes it happens that both are at fault.

The first general defect of the French judicial organism emphasized in *La Robe Rouge* is the starvation salaries. Vagret, after long years of service, receives less than eighty dollars a month, yet he must entertain, in order to preserve the dignity of his office.<sup>3</sup> No wonder that Mme. Vagret advises their daughter not to marry a

<sup>1</sup> A. Kahn, *Le Théâtre Soc. en France*, p. 159.

<sup>2</sup> *Discours sur la Robe Rouge*, p. 27. Maître Borde's masterly essay of criticism constitutes an authoritative document, which we shall quote repeatedly in this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> O. Tixier remarks naïvely: "Il est tout à fait faux de soutenir qu'un magistrat soit contraint de donner des dîners et des réceptions; il dépend de sa volonté de s'affranchir de telles obligations." (*Rev. Bleue*, Oct. 1, 1904.) Aguesseau, whose ideal was the austere simplicity of the early Roman Republic, denounces what he calls the pomp and luxury of the French magistracy in practically all his *Mercuriales*.



magistrate. At the annual meeting of the Magistrates' League, in 1914, resolutions were adopted urging that their "*traitements de misère et de famine*" be raised without delay, since these salaries, originally inadequate, have remained stationary for nearly fifty years, during which time the cost of living has rapidly increased.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes a magistrate must wait over thirty years before receiving a salary of six hundred dollars.<sup>2</sup> English magistrates, according to Maître Borde, are paid eight or ten times as much as their French colleagues.<sup>3</sup> This fact and the absence of a fixed scale of promotion, says Maître Borde, keep many able men from the judicial profession and force many who enter it to resort to intrigue in the hope of obtaining a promotion which will enable them to maintain the dignity of their calling.<sup>4</sup> It is indisputable that to those who would judge others, a certain material prestige is fully as important as moral prestige. Even the saintly character of a shabby, untidy judge like Balzac's Popinot does not suffice to save him from the list of the *déclassés*.

The tendency to seek promotion through intrigue, which is a characteristic manifestation of the *fièvre de l'avancement*, leads to one of the cardinal faults of the magistracy. According to La Bouzule, many magistrates, instead of regarding

<sup>1</sup> "L'Amicale de la Magistrature," *Matin*, Apr. 19, 1914.

<sup>2</sup> F. Malepeyre, *La Magistrature en France* (1900), p. 182.

<sup>3</sup> *Discours*, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37. Cf. A. Juhellé, *Sous la Toque*, p. 386.



their vocation as a priesthood, consider it a career; hence their sole concern is to "arrive."<sup>1</sup> We see Brieux's emphatic condemnation of this attitude in the contemptible efforts of Mouzon to curry favour with all who can be of service to him. Maître Borde tells us that as early as 1859 the Minister of Justice forbade magistrates to solicit vacant offices, but that all measures failed to check the abuse, which a subsequent minister had the courage to stigmatize openly in the Senate as "the sore of the magistracy."<sup>2</sup>

Another evil is the obsequiousness of the magistracy towards the press, which dispenses praise and censure, makes or destroys reputations. Brieux implies that the judiciary, like opera singers, dread an unfavourable "write-up."<sup>3</sup> Maître

<sup>1</sup> Tolstoy says of the Russian magistracy: "They are officials. They receive their salaries and want them increased, and there their principles end." (*Resurrection*, vol. i, bk. ii, ch. ii.) *La Robe Rouge* has a number of features in common with *Resurrection*, but as Tolstoy's work was not translated into French until 1900, it is unlikely that Brieux had read it, though he doubtless knew Tolstoy's general attitude. Tolstoy's arraignment of the magistracy is on the whole quite as severe as Brieux's. In part i, book i, he says: "The public prosecutor was very ambitious and had firmly made up his mind to get on. He therefore thought it necessary to obtain a conviction whenever he prosecuted."

<sup>2</sup> *Discours*, p. 38. According to F. Malepeyre, this shameful intriguing began in 1852, following an imperial decree fixing the age of retirement for magistrates. *La Magistrature en France*, p. 147.

<sup>3</sup> The reason for this servility is clear from a remark of René Doumic, who says of the magistrate: "Le souci de ne pas compromettre son avancement se mêle à toutes ses démarches, influe sur tous ses actes." *Deux Mondes*, Apr. 1, 1900.

Borde declares that you will find the greatest number of reporters neither at the Prime Minister's nor at the Ministry of the Interior, but in the anterooms of examining magistrates.<sup>1</sup> According to ex-President Loubet, many a judge talks too much and betrays professional secrets.<sup>2</sup> "The newspapers," says one of Paul Adam's characters, "decide in advance for or against conviction. Imbued with the arguments of the press, jurymen have their minds made up before the trial begins."<sup>3</sup> The Steinheil case (1908) and the Cadiou case (1914) are striking instances of the efforts of the press to discredit the magistracy by forcing public opinion.<sup>4</sup> The evil is the greater because, as Balzac makes a judge declare in one of his novels, "journalism can assert and suppose everything, but our dignity forbids us to reply."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Discours*, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Henry Bordeaux observes: "In theory, an examining magistrate should surround himself with mystery and silence; in practice, the judicial personnel constantly force his door and wrest his secrets from him." *Le Lac Noir*, ch. iv.

<sup>3</sup> *Robes Rouges*, p. 228. A. Juhellé thinks that examining magistrates, having a mortal dread of the press, often are themselves intimidated by popular manifestations. *Sous la Toque*, pp. 97, 261.

<sup>4</sup> É. Faguet remarks that both the provincial and the Paris press are almost invariably disposed to regard accused as so many "irresponsibles." *Culte de l'Incompétence*, p. 163.

<sup>5</sup> *L'Interdiction*, p. 291. Louis Bruyère thinks that this magisterial dignity may be false. In *Le Devoir*, his judge is cold, cruel, and even corrupt—all in order to preserve the traditional austerity of the profession. Two hundred and fifty years earlier, La Bruyère spoke of "judges . . . whom a too great affectation to appear incorruptible makes unjust." (*Caractères*,

Then, too, there is the deplorable political dependence of the magistracy. Whatever other reasons we may have suggested for their intrigue and servility, the fundamental one must be sought in their relation to their employer: the government. Evidently the term permanency is a fiction so long as the government may withhold promotion from those who refuse to do its will. In *La Robe Rouge*, the "reasoner" tells us that only those without ambition and material wants have the courage to assert their so-called independence. Nor does the government fail to exert pressure freely, if we are to believe Émile Faguet, who writes: "The ordinary thing is for the government to interfere in judicial cases. As a rule, too, deputies meddle personally in judicial matters." He asserts that when it is a question of a political case, the French magistracy does not feel responsible, since its office is only to serve as the government's mouth-piece. When the government is a party in a suit, it insists on taking charge in order to prevent an unfavourable decision, which would be inadmissible.<sup>1</sup> This abuse can be traced back many years. Séguier's oft-quoted retort to Charles X: "The Court renders judgments, not services," owes its vogue and importance to its spirit.<sup>2</sup> We have noted Balzac's

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ch. xiv.) In 1708, Aguesseau censured the same fault. *Eleventh Mercuriale*.

<sup>1</sup> *L'Horreur des Responsabilités*.

<sup>2</sup> Thanks to this incident, the magistracy is said to have enjoyed a certain popularity for a quarter of a century.

incrimination of the magistracy under Louis-Philippe. A more recent writer generalizes the accusation and avers that the magistrate has been a functionary, an agent of the government, under every régime.<sup>1</sup> At any rate, F. Malepeyre is convinced that both despotic and liberal governments in France always have endeavoured to have justice at their disposal.<sup>2</sup> According to Becque, when the government orders a magistrate to lie down, he obeys without a murmur.<sup>3</sup> The wisdom, if not the necessity, of this obedience is attested by so many writers that Paul Flat justly concludes: "A magistrate's promotion is impossible without political protection."<sup>4</sup> It is Mouzon's "pull" with

<sup>1</sup> A. Juhellé, *Sous la Toque*, p. 271. On page 285 of this work we read: "A deputy's protection availed a magistrate seeking promotion more than did the greatest personal merit." Daygrand, a member of the judiciary in Émile Fabre's *Les Vainqueurs*, is everywhere guided by the principle that a magistrate's promotion depends on his political "pull." In Barrès's *Les Déracinés* (ch. xx), Bouteiller solicits the intervention of the Minister on behalf of his protégés.

<sup>2</sup> *La Magistrature en France*, p. 212.

<sup>3</sup> *Les Polichinelles*, iii, 16. While the notary is perhaps the most despicable character in *Les Corbeaux*, yet somehow we feel that the author does not intend him as a normal representative of the magistracy. At any rate, there can be no direct comparison of Becque's drama with Brieux's, for Bourdon does not, like the magistrates in *La Robe Rouge*, owe his moral corruption to such semi-honourable ambient influences, so to speak, as ambition and the faults of the profession, but rather to the inherent weakness of his character.

<sup>4</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Dec. 5, 1908. "Si nous examinons la carrière du magistrat français," observes Prévost-Paradol, "nous verrons qu'il n'est pas un seul instant de son existence où il n'ait à désirer



Mondoubleau, the deputy, that wins him the "red robe" of a *conseiller*, an honour which, to be sure, he does not live to enjoy. And a patron, in order to have the greater number of dependents, exerts himself to be in favour with the Minister of Justice. When a deputy can boast of being on terms of "thee" and "thou" with the Minister, his influence attains its apogee. This is the good fortune of Mouzon's Gascon protector, who always takes pains to speak of the Minister of Justice as "*Eugène*." This tutelage constitutes the gravest of menaces to the judiciary. If the peril is not checked, it will poison the whole organism, so affording Paul Bourget's socialist prime minister, Portal, the desired opportunity of "cutting into the gangrene of the magistracy,"<sup>1</sup> unless another storm like that of Ninety-Two should sweep away both laws and judges, as the Margueritte brothers seem to predict.<sup>2</sup> As Guizot has said, when politics penetrates the enclosure of a tribunal, Justice must leave. Only a radical, organic reform seriously guaranteeing the independence of the magistracy can abolish this crying abuse.<sup>3</sup>

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de monter et où il puisse monter sans que le pouvoir exécutif veuille bien lui tendre la main." *La France Nouvelle* (1868), p. 160.

<sup>1</sup> *Le Tribun* (1911), i, 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Deux Vies*, pt. v, ch. i. In both *Le Cœur et la Loi*, by the same authors, and F. Vandérem's *La Victime* a tribunal president is influenced by recommendations.

<sup>3</sup> *Nos Magistrats* (1908), a four-act drama by Arthur Bernède, treats the theme of intrigue, bribery, and traffic in appointments



A grave fault of the magistracy which unlike those just enumerated it is within their power to correct, is the danger of following a preconceived theory, till officers of the law regard all witnesses for the defence as imbeciles or liars and endeavour to force a confession, sincerely believing that their theory of the crime must be the correct one.<sup>1</sup> *La Robe Rouge* suggests that the old school of magistrates was almost entirely free from this failing<sup>2</sup>; for Delorme soon releases his vagabond, whom indeed he has arrested merely to satisfy the clamour of the press. Vagret, however, in his feverish desire for a capital conviction, is forced to admit: "In studying the case, I had so completely conceived in advance the theory of Etchepare's guilt, that when an argument in his favour presented

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in the Department of Justice. In order to get her husband, a provincial prosecuting attorney, transferred to Paris, Mme. Rimbert becomes the mistress of the first assistant of the Minister of Justice. This assistant, Brindeau, who shields defrauders and criminals for bribes, obtains the appointment of Rimbert as examining magistrate in the capital. It goes without saying that when his traffic is discovered, the case is given for investigation to the upright Rimbert, who does not know that he owes his appointment to Brindeau. The latter commits suicide. Mme. Rimbert, profoundly repentant, hopes that her husband will pardon her.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *L'Affaire Mathieu* (1901), by Tristan Bernard. Of his two examining magistrates, one is energetic, the other, timid, but both are equally apt at constructing theories, which they consider so many tangible facts, while refusing to admit the most self-evident truth, if it conflicts with their "system."

<sup>2</sup> It is, however, evident from Aguesseau's 17th *Mercuriale* (*La Prévention*, 1714), that he foresaw this weakness.

itself to my mind, I rejected it emphatically with a shrug of my shoulders."<sup>1</sup> As soon as his better nature has reasserted itself, we learn that the cause of his weakness was the very nature of the magistrate's profession, which morally deforms those who practice it.<sup>2</sup> Magistrates are inclined to regard every suspect as an accused, and every accused as guilty.<sup>3</sup> Or as Daudet says, examining magistrates see assassins everywhere.<sup>4</sup> That here

<sup>1</sup> Prévost-Paradol speaks of "cette recherche obstinée de l'aveu, qui est le fléau traditionnel de notre procédure." *La France Nouvelle*, p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> In the *Goncourt Journal* for Feb. 14, 1877, we read: "The wife of our Presiding Judge said to Flaubert: 'We are very happy. My husband has not had a single acquittal during the session.'"

G. Leroux's drama, *La Maison des Juges*, develops the theme that the magistrate's profession makes him cruel in spite of himself. We see the consequences of this acquired cruelty in Octave Mirbeau's one-act play, *Le Portefeuille* (1902). An honest but penniless old man brings to the commissary of police a purse containing 10,000 francs, which he has found. The official, at first delighted and amazed, discovers that the man is homeless and without an occupation, and so he immediately locks him up as a vagabond.

<sup>3</sup> Maître Borde quotes an authority who asserts that the examining magistrate regards the accusation not as an hypothesis to be verified, but as a theorem to be demonstrated and terminated with the classic Q. E. D. Maître Borde says that, when in a certain trial the defendant protested his innocence, the judge thundered forth: "Well, prove it, then!"

<sup>4</sup> Marie-Joseph Chénier characterizes the prisoner's situation with the lines:

"Il est seul, sans conseil, près d'un juge implacable,  
Qui semble avoir besoin de le trouver coupable."

*Jean Calas*, ii, 3.

is one of the cardinal faults of the French system, Édouard Rod points out emphatically in *L'Inutile Effort*. "We in England," says his solicitor, Bell, "give the defendant every chance of defence. He is not at once treated as if the accusation were the proof; nor do we lay snares to embarrass him as you do in France."<sup>1</sup> It follows naturally that but scant respect is shown to witnesses for the defence. Anatole France's hero, Crainquebille, is convicted in spite of a famous surgeon's emphatic testimony in his favour, because the judge regards great savants like Claude Bernard and Pasteur as subject to error, whereas a policeman—a mere official number, so to speak—cannot be mistaken. Such incidents force Maître Borde to the conclusion that "the moment a witness testifies in favour of the prisoner, he is not believed."<sup>2</sup>

Allied to this last fault of French legal procedure is the tendency to humiliate the prisoner with insulting personal remarks. Bunerat says to

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Or again, he deplores the ferocity of the magistrate, who,

" . . . se croyant toujours entouré de coupables,  
Voit couler d'un œil sec le sang de ses semblables."

*Ibid.*, iii, 4.

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes this magisterial attitude produces humorous situations. In his vaudeville, *La Cagnotte* (1864), Labiche shows how a party of innocent provincials, who have come to Paris to spend the money accumulated from fines at cards, are suspected of theft and arrested. Their banal remarks are misconstrued and charged against them. Like Mouzon, the judge says to them: "In your own interest I urge you to confess." Cf. Alexandre Bisson's *La Famille Pont-Biquet*.

<sup>2</sup> *Discours*, p. 69.

Etchepare: "Did you not flay two sheep on the morning of the crime?" "Yes," replies the defendant. "So you were practicing for the deed?" It is officially recorded that a judge once said to a witness: "Because your father is blind, is no reason why you should be deaf."<sup>1</sup> The most revolting form of this abuse consists in the use of the court record as damaging evidence, particularly when the magistrate is confronted with the danger of seeing his "theory" break down. Thus in *La Robe Rouge*, Mouzon not only mentions Etchepare's previous convictions, but also exploits the wife's judicial record in the presence of her unsuspecting husband. And so this model wife and mother, after having atoned for her crime during ten years of married life, finds herself a social outcast, driven from her home, bereft of her children, and scorned by an enraged husband.<sup>2</sup> A similar tragic situation is the theme of *L'Enquête* (*The Investigation*, 1902), a drama of considerable merit by Georges Henriot, in which it serves the same purpose—by revealing the wife's

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Such wanton cruelty would satisfy even A. Juhellé's reactionary judge, Haas, who maintains that there are times when it is absolutely necessary to find a culprit, since every crime demands its expiation. If the right person can be apprehended, so much the better; but in no case must Justice be discredited. (*Sous la Toque*, p. 110.) Petrus Lamarque, Gaston Leroux's "heroic soldier of the necessary falsehood," who advocates this philosophy, condemns three innocent men to death, in order to "reassure" society. *La Maison des Juges*, ii, 11.



fault, to wrest a confession from the prisoner.<sup>1</sup> Maurice Landay's play, *La Loi de Pardon* (*The Law of Pardon*, 1905), is likewise a protest against exploitation of a prisoner's court record. Mériex, the hero, finding that his *casier judiciaire* pursues him everywhere, condemns the injustice in the words: "I committed a crime, it is true, but I have paid my debt to society."<sup>2</sup>

Another injustice is the arrest and prosecution each year of persons for crimes that they have not committed. Release after a varied period of detention is gratifying, but it offers the victim very incomplete consolation for moral and material damages. Maître Borde cites the case of an Alsatian butcher, who was brought back to France from Algiers in handcuffs, tried on a false charge, and finally released—with a vagabond's return ticket. The court which had taken this man for a thief set him free as a beggar.<sup>3</sup> In *La Robe Rouge* the Etchepares are discharged morally and financially ruined; yet, when Vagret expresses pity for them, the President of the Assizes says with indignant surprise: "Why, they are acquitted; what more could they wish—a pension?"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the enraged wife's denunciation of the Code, see Act I, sc. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *La Loi de Pardon*, ii, 8. Long ago Raymond Poincaré urged the enactment of a law tending to erase the stain from repentant ex-convicts. *Rev. Bleue*, Mar. 11, 1882.

<sup>3</sup> *Discours*, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> In *Le Bon Juge* (1901), A. Bisson's light caricature of the French magistracy, one man is arrested for murder on an any-



Fortunately Vagret's is not the only instance of a disinterested desire for justice recorded in recent French literature. In Bordeaux's *Le Lac Noir* (*The Black Lake*), a *juge d'instruction*, discovering his fine-spun theory wrong, appears as a witness for the prisoner, in order to clear him. In Gaston Leroux's *La Maison des Juges* (*The Family of Judges*, 1907), a very humane advocate-general, resolved that the man he has just been prosecuting shall get justice, adopts the same course.<sup>1</sup> When François Coppée's prosecuting attorney, Lescuyer, recognizes in the prisoner his own illegitimate son,<sup>2</sup> he has the courage to take upon himself the blame for the young man's crime. In each case, as in *La Robe Rouge*, the result is an acquittal; but the attorney incurs the contempt of his colleagues.

Outside of the judiciary, no doubt, there are plenty of people who believe the words of Berryer which Vagret quotes: "It is better to set ten guilty persons free than to convict one who is innocent." Accordingly the public excitement at the discovery of a mistaken conviction justifies what Mme. de Staël says: "When an innocent man dies on the scaffold, successive generations

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mous accusation and confined several weeks in jail before being granted a hearing; another suffers damage because there are found in his possession counterfeit securities, which he has bought in good faith. To our delight, the author, by a *coup de théâtre*, turns the tables, so that the examining judge is himself arrested on the same two charges.

<sup>1</sup> Act III, sc. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Coupable*, p. 322.

concern themselves about his misfortune, whereas thousands of men perish in a battle, yet nobody inquires about their fate.”<sup>1</sup> Recently Jacques Dhur has interested himself so much in the victims of judicial errors that he has not only written a drama in their behalf, *À la Nouvelle*, but he has investigated the claims of convicts detained on the island of New Caledonia and brought about the release of a few of them. It has been pointed out that nowadays an unjust conviction, if thus detected later, may be preferable to an acquittal. For the victim of an unjust conviction, according to a recent law, is allowed an indemnity, whereas such persons as Etchepare and the Alsatian butcher receive nothing.<sup>2</sup>

But, after all, sympathy is sometimes misplaced, as Paul Masson-Forestier shows, with rare talent, in *Angoisses de Juge* (*Judicial Anguish*, 1898), in which it turns out that the man whom the jury has convicted, in order to “preserve the prestige of Justice”—although the examining magistrate thinks him innocent and continues with true Voltairian zeal to work for his rehabilitation—subsequently makes a complete confession of guilt.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *De l'Allemagne*, pt. iii, ch. xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Voltaire, who protested against the large number of judicial errors, demanded an indemnity for the falsely accused (*Commentaire sur les Délits*). The *Cahiers* of the *États Généraux* approved his demand, after Necker, also, had advocated it.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the same author's *Remords d'Avocat* (1896), a novel depicting a solicitor's “remorse” for obtaining the acquittal of a brutal assassin.

The last of Brieux's charges against the French judicial system which we shall take up is that the dread of scandal causes high officials to connive at political corruption. The Attorney-General, having come to Mauléon with the intention of dismissing Mouzon for disorderly conduct while on a spree in Bordeaux, is afraid to take action because an editor of the place threatens to make capital of the scandal unless Mouzon is transferred to some other post. At this point, Mouzon's Gascon protector, the deputy Mondoubleau, intervenes and persuades the Attorney-General to promote his protégé, instead of dismissing him, since "Eugène" (the Minister of Justice) desires above everything else to prevent scandal. This happy solution reconciles the interests of all concerned, whereas an attempt to remove Mouzon would have splattered the togas of all with mud.<sup>1</sup>

Plenty of further evidence might be adduced to corroborate Brieux's strictures on the magistracy—as Paul Adam's *Robes Rouges* (1891), in which a

<sup>1</sup> An identical situation in A. Juhellé's novel, *Sous la Toque* (p. 255), where each successive scandal has been the cause of the magistrate's promotion.

The rather frequent allusions, in recent French literature, to the slack morality of the magistracy should be taken with reserve. Alfred Capus, however, says that the casinos of the watering places, the clubs and even the gambling dens of Paris, were much frequented by the younger magistrates of twenty-five years ago. ("Joueurs et Magistrats," *Figaro*, Oct. 16, 1911.) Paul Flat recalls the time when a certain presiding judge's mother-in-law followed Mrs. Warren's profession. *Rev. Bleue*, Apr. 11, 1914.

young magistrate, in order to win promotion, "invents" an assassin; yet only one more such work is distinctive enough to warrant considering it in detail — *Le Lac Noir* (1902), the novel by Henry Bordeaux already referred to. Though in some respects the work most closely resembling *La Robe Rouge*, it gives little prominence to the "promotion fever."

Mme. Fraizier, a young peasant woman about to become a mother, is disembowelled by an assassin, who cuts the child's heart out. This circumstance, the *juge d'instruction*, Girardet, at first declares, clearly indicates an act of vengeance on the part of a disappointed suitor, aimed at the victim's offspring,—a supposition not borne out by the facts. Girardet next hits upon the theory of an act of judicial vengeance, for which French Savoy, the seat of the crime, is famous. This time everything confirms his suspicions. The woman's husband has had a long lawsuit with his neighbour, Lamadoux, who, it is said, has threatened to choke him. Lamadoux and his wife are arrested, and all tongues get busy. Some witnesses know that the alleged assassin has premeditated the murder, others have seen him come out of Fraizier's house, etc.<sup>1</sup> Like Etchepare, Lamadoux at first insists that he was far away at the time; but when his alibi breaks down, he

<sup>1</sup> As soon as Paul Adam's alleged criminal, Denesolle, was arrested, accusing witnesses became legion. *Robes Rouges*, p. 227.



admits that he was at home. His *casier judiciaire* makes his case hopeless, so that Girardet, resorting to Mouzon's tactics, urges him to confess. In order to clinch his argument, the magistrate enumerates the offences charged against the prisoner in his judicial record. And upon searching the defendant's house again, the authorities even find the dagger used by the assassin. "My doubts are dissipated," says Girardet. "I have the murderer."

Lamadoux and his wife are held for the grand jury, although the defendant's former attorney (now his one and only friend) declares emphatically that he is quite incapable of committing such a crime. It does seem odd that, in order to avenge himself on Fraizier, Lamadoux should attack his wife in such a fiendish manner. But the prosecuting attorney pronounces Girardet's act of accusation a veritable masterpiece. The certainty of a clear-cut conviction rejoices his heart, in view of the numerous acquittals of the preceding session. Not only will this put an end to the scandal, but also it may bring him his much desired promotion and make him a tribunal president.

Notwithstanding the compliments heaped upon him by the local press, Girardet, being conscientious, continues to meditate over the case. By the merest chance, a friend's researches in sorcery give him a suggestion which leads to a new theory of the crime. During the investigation, several women declared that they had been the object



of attack by a madman, but their stories were dismissed as absurd. When now, however, Girardet reads in his friend's treatise about the magic properties of a child's heart if torn from its mother's womb, it suggests to him an alleged sorcerer in the neighbourhood named Gruz.

But unfortunately, having once submitted his report, Girardet cannot easily undo his "master-piece," owing to a lack of provision for such action in the French Code. Will he be obliged to sit by powerless, in silence, and witness the completion of the tragedy of which he is the author? No, he determines to speak out, however much he regrets to spoil his fine-spun theory.

Girardet's fears are soon confirmed. When he attempts to explain his new theory, the prosecuting attorney exclaims with indignation: "Have you thought about the discredit which you are going to bring upon Justice? A scrupulous person should not enter the magistracy. Keep your scruples to yourself!" After a fruitless attempt to get the Presiding Judge to take the matter up (this judge is one of those officials who, as Émile Faguet says, "dread responsibility"), Girardet appeals to a retired magistrate, a very just and humane man—for the reason, doubtless, that, like Brioux's La Bouzule, he now dares to be just—who advises him to appear as a witness for the defence. Thanks to Girardet's efforts, Lamadoux is acquitted and Gruz convicted in his stead. But just as in *La Robe Rouge*, the Lamadoux suffer socially as if

guilty. "Disgraced, despised, and persecuted, they had to sell their small farm and take the road to exile."

While *Le Lac Noir* and *La Robe Rouge* have several vital points in common: the examining magistrate's obstinate adherence to his theories; the indifference—or even hostility—of the judiciary to the prisoner, if a just verdict may compromise their dignity; the difference between the old school of magistrates and the new; the possibility of being just and humane as soon as one has retired from the profession; respect for form or routine, clothed in the garb of precedent, at all costs; the injustice of referring to the defendant's *casier judiciaire*; and finally the harm that may result to a person falsely accused from the stupid injustice of his neighbours,—while in these points the two authors agree, Bordeaux avoids the vehemence of Brieux's scathing satire and denunciation. His novel is romantic, even fantastic, at times, owing to the part played by necromancy, yet everything in it "might have happened." It was a master-stroke to show that the very clew which all sane magistrates would ordinarily dismiss as absurd proved the right one. Nothing else could better emphasize the necessity of a magistrate's proceeding cautiously, patiently, and with an open mind.

Our examination of the salient features of *La Robe Rouge*, with collateral evidence for or against each of the author's implied assertions, shows

that critics and other men of letters sustain Brieux in all his criticisms. Various dramatists and novelists have each treated one or more phases of his theme with varying verisimilitude, but he is the first to give us a comprehensive, life-like drama on the subject. Nobody else has presented so well and so fairly the whole extent of the abuses charged against the French magistracy.<sup>1</sup> For it is one thing to satirize, and quite a different thing to keep one's satire within the bounds of convincing fairness. So far as Brieux has to do with the magistracy in other plays of his, as in *Le Berceau*, *Maternité*, and *Suzette*, his attitude towards them is the same as in *La Robe Rouge*—just but severe.

Though after all Brieux does not discover a panacea for the ills of the magistracy—it was hardly to be expected,—*La Robe Rouge* should contribute much towards clearing up the moot question whether political matters are henceforth to be decided at the Palace of Justice or justice rendered at the Palais-Bourbon. Émile Faguet thinks that the best means of reorganizing the magistracy and restoring the prestige of its representatives would be to let the magistrate buy

<sup>1</sup> F. Gaiffe, after speaking of the mediocre dramatic documents on the magistracy under the Old Régime, says that those who affect contempt for the contemporary drama would think much more highly of *La Robe Rouge* if they had read Mercier's *Le Juge* and Chénier's *Jean Calas*. *Le Drame en Fr. au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, p. 378.

his office, as was customary under the Old Régime.<sup>1</sup> This system he would modify in such a way that the State would pay the magistrates but would neither appoint nor promote them. The power of appointment he would give to the Supreme Court (Cour de Cassation), whose members should themselves be elected, as vacancies occurred, by the general body of magistrates.<sup>2</sup> Such a system might make the magistrate politically independent, but it is doubtful whether it would give him sufficient moral prestige in a modern democracy. Moreover, in an age when the "codfish nobility" presume to have whatever they want, if money will buy it, judicial offices might frequently pass into the hands of unworthy occupants.

Whether the present judicial system should be maintained or another substituted for it, some reorganization seems imperative. As a magistrate writes for the *Matin*<sup>3</sup>:

If something is not done, if perjury continues to be authorized, if medical jurisprudence remains in its infancy, if it is considered that examining magistrates

<sup>1</sup> *L'Horreur des Responsabilités*, p. 97. Faguet follows Montesquieu and opposes Voltaire. "Voltaire," he declares, "comprend si peu la question qu'il appelle vendre la justice ce qui précisément empêche que les arrêts soient à vendre." (*Ibid.*, p. 15.) He concludes that the State must choose one of two things: Either venality of the magistrate's office or venality of the magistrate.

<sup>2</sup> Prévost-Paradol proposed a somewhat similar judicial system. *La France Nouvelle*, p. 163.

<sup>3</sup> *La Crise de la Justice Criminelle*, Mar. 16, 1914.

have no need of serious training or adequate payment, no one need be astonished to see French justice fail increasingly to dissipate criminal mysteries, to see it more and more arrest the innocent and allow the guilty to escape.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding the grave accusations brought against her magistracy, France may well feel proud of the great names that have shed lustre upon the profession. No other country has produced men superior to De Thou, Étienne Pasquier, Harlay, L'Hospital, Mathieu Molé, Lamoignon, Joly de Fleury, Aguesseau, Séguier, Bonjean.



## CHAPTER XIV

### WET NURSING. VENEREAL DISEASES

*Les Remplacantes* (Brieux)—*Donatienne* (Bazin)—*Le Lait d'une Autre* (Hepp)—*Nous, les Mères* (Margueritte)—*Les Avariés* (Brieux)—*La Graine* (Couvreur).

BALZAC was right when he said that the annalist of an epoch uncovers many sore-spots.<sup>1</sup> This is particularly true of an author who would be the social annalist of his time. Often in such a case his problem will consist not so much in uncovering vice as in bringing it effectively before the public and making people understand its real nature. For, if rationally presented, a social malady commonly considered horrible and not to be spoken of, may prove no more disgraceful nor more destructive to life than a custom sanctioned by society. Such at all events was Brieux's belief in choosing the subjects of the two plays that followed quickly after *La Robe Rouge*—wet nursing and syphilis. Both seem sufficiently unpromising subjects for literary treatment—a presumption not altogether disproved by the results. The plays

<sup>1</sup> *Le Cabinet des Antiques*, p. 1.

in which he handles them—*Les Remplaçantes* (*The Substitutes*) and *Les Avariés* (*Damaged Goods*)—are not among Brieux's greatest literary successes. But more than any others they have shown his boldness in choice of theme and so, in a way, his zeal as a reformer. It is further testimony to Brieux's daring originality, that whereas society has accepted wet nursing complacently, while looking on syphilis with unspeakable horror, he tries to depict them as evils with equally harmful results. The high rate of infant mortality in regions which furnish substitute mothers seems to prove that such nursing entails almost as great loss of life as syphilis—probably greater than syphilis need cause, if properly treated.

Nursing for hire is as old as civilization, or perhaps we should say, as old as *corrupt* civilization. In antiquity, mothers were compelled by law to nurse their babies. Both the Spartans and the Athenians enforced this regulation rigorously, at least until their manners became corrupt. A number of women, according to Demosthenes, were not only publicly reprimanded, but even prosecuted, for having shirked this duty without valid reasons. Under the virtuous Roman Republic, we find maternal nursing similarly in favour; better than prescribed, the duty was held in honour. Not until the Empire, when an unprecedented wave of degeneracy swept everything with it, did mothers confide, or rather abandon, their children to hired nurses.

Such a custom, if adopted in Gaul, cannot have existed long with the stern virtues of early Christianity. But it came into vogue after the Renaissance. Realizing the danger, Montaigne wrote: "I am convinced that our worst vices begin to form in our infancy, and that our destiny is largely in the hands of our wet nurses."<sup>1</sup> During the reign of Louis XIV, a sense of decorum and the dread of scandal prevented the custom from spreading. But in the licentious reaction of the eighteenth century, it threatened for a time to assume alarming proportions. Fear of it is reflected in the writings of such men as Rousseau, Restif de la Bretonne,<sup>2</sup> and Sedaine.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The ancients admitted the possibility of the transmission of moral influences from wet nurse to infant. Tiberius's inebriety was regarded as a direct heritage from his nurse, who had an inordinate thirst for wine. . . . Certain physicians of our time do not hesitate to affirm that the nurse's milk has an incontestable influence upon the moral faculties of her suckling." É. Grimard, *L'Enfant, son Passé, son Avenir*, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> *La Mère Qui Nourrit*. Restif de la Bretonne, though professing a veritable cult for Rousseau, sees both evil and good in the custom. He relates the story of two Parisian women, cousins, who sincerely desire to nurse their babies themselves. But not being physically very strong, each is persuaded by her husband to put the baby—especially if a boy, and hence the future representative of the family—in the charge of a peasant nurse, in order to make it vigorous and robust. Strange to say, no harm results from this arrangement, for the two eldest sons, who have each had a nurse, are as affectionately attached to their mother as the other children. Nevertheless, one of the husbands, speaking in the name of the author, says that a mother should heed the voice of nature and entrust her baby to a hired nurse only when her own services would be injurious.

<sup>3</sup> *Maillard ou Paris Sauvé*.

The agitation started by Rousseau, besides attracting wide attention, had a wholesome influence during the last decades of the Old Régime, so that at the time of the Revolution there was temporary reform. In fact the "substitute" custom had not yet found much favour among the bourgeoisie. But with their rise the abuse began again to spread. French literature of the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, however, paid almost no attention to it. The first recent author to treat the subject was François Coppée, who in 1886 contributed *La Nourrice* (*The Nurse*), the touching story of a peasant nurse whose child dies at home while she is engaged in Paris. Five years later appeared *Le Lait d'une Autre* (*Another Woman's Milk*), a "powerful and wholesome novel,"<sup>1</sup> in which Alexandre Hepp emphasizes the baneful influence that the nurse may have upon the child. René Bazin, the next author to take up the theme, depicts in *Donatienne* (1902) the utter ruin of a peasant household.

These novels exercised a salutary influence within their sphere; but according to Brioux's theory, the readers to whom a novel appeals are generally too restricted in number for the novel to stir up wide discussion and so prepare the way for effective social reform. This can be accomplished better through the medium of the stage, since so many more people go to the theatre than

<sup>1</sup> So Joseph Reinach characterizes the book. *Athenæum*, July 2, 1892.

read books; and so Brieux, undeterred by the dramatic difficulties of his subject, resolved to bring the question of wet nursing squarely before the public. The result was *Les Remplaçantes*, first represented by Antoine, in 1901. The scene of Acts I and III is in a French village; Act II takes place in Paris.

We learn from conversation at the beginning of the play that in the part of provincial France in which the action takes place, both married and unmarried mothers (the latter are said to be preferred), if able to obtain employment as nurses in Paris, leave their babies at home to be brought up with the bottle. A woman unable to qualify as a "substitute" for a bourgeoisie of the metropolis, tries to secure a foundling or an orphan baby to bring up at home. These two sources of income constitute the only local industry. While a man's wife is engaged in Paris, he lives in idleness, spending at the cabaret the wages she earns. If he wants more money, he invents a story of domestic misfortune, and his wife's employers, who live in constant dread of her leaving them, hasten to send him some bank-bills. No wonder these peasant women are valued at home only for their ability to serve as "substitutes." We learn, too, that the business of a nurse-agent, in whose book all "applicants" are registered, is very remunerative. Upon his return from Paris with a list of "vacancies," he is besieged by both duly qualified and would-be nurses.



François Planchot, one of these agents, reports a "beautiful" place for his nephew's wife, Lazarette. Mme. Denisart, whose nurse has just left, will soon arrive in her motor car with a physician, to make the engagement. Lazarette, who comes from a part of France in which hired nursing is unknown, does not want to rob her baby and expose her husband to demoralization for a little money. Though her husband is of the same opinion, he lacks the courage to oppose the will of his father and uncle. The father, "père Planchot," a whining grumbler without means of support, reminds Lazarette that after the birth of her first child she did not hire herself out, and that she was without a dowry, whereas her husband had three hundred dollars. The result is that when Mme. Denisart arrives, Lazarette is obliged to accept her offer, leaving her baby in the care of her husband's parents, who are to receive a part of her wages. Dr. Richon, the plain country physician whom we have met in *L'Évasion*, points out as the author's spokesman the risk that a nurse like Lazarette runs of contracting venereal disease and contaminating her family. He declares, moreover, that as a result of their mercenary custom such peasant women have lost the instinct of motherhood.

Act II opens with a picture, verging on caricature, of Mme. Denisart and her worldly Parisian acquaintances, whose entire time does not suffice for their calls, days at home, fashionable lectures,

etc. The Denisarts dictate Lazarette's diet, her habits, and her dress: everything must be subordinated to the welfare of "monsieur Guy" (the baby). On the other hand, knowing that Lazarette will leave if her own child falls ill, they let Planchot exploit their fear with alarming stories of domestic misfortune.

During a call by Dr. Richon, Mme. Denisart and her frivolous guests try to make game of him, but he turns the tables, giving them a salutary lecture on the duties of motherhood and the ravages caused in his provincial town by the nurse evil.

For forty years [he says] I have seen innocent children die who would today be living, if their mothers had not left them, to take charge of your babies. The nursing of her child ought to be regarded by a woman as her military service. Before 1870, a rich man could escape military service, in France, by hiring a substitute. There are no longer substitute soldiers; there should no longer be substitute mothers (*remplaçantes*).

Dr. Richon's arraignment amazes the vain *caillettes*, who have never given a moment's reflection to the fate of their innocent little victims in the country.

When in the last act Lazarette discovers that her employers are concealing the news of her child's illness, she takes the train for home. She finds her house in confusion. Planchot, like the other men

whose wives "serve" in Paris, has been spending his time at the cabaret or with another woman. After Lazarette has settled the score with this woman, her husband promises to reform. "Père Planchot" tries to make her return to Paris, but the son tells him that henceforth he intends to be master in his own house. In the final scene, Dr. Richon congratulates Lazarette on her course of action and points out to "père Planchot" how much the people of their village would gain by giving up nursing for useful work at home.

The great popularity which *Les Remplaçantes* has enjoyed is due not only to a somewhat spicy treatment of the subject, but also to the literary merit of the play. For apart from comic exaggeration, suggestive of some of the earlier plays, Acts I and III constitute a masterful representation of provincial manners.<sup>1</sup> Lazarette, the most important character, is admirable. Natural, too, are Planchot, his uncle, and "père Planchot." But notwithstanding these strong features, the play is marred by a duality of tone, which partially defeats the dramatist's didactic purpose, since the broadly comic element harmonizes poorly with Dr. Richon's sermons.

We have noticed this same fault particularly

<sup>1</sup> E. Stoullig says of the play: "Le premier acte est simplement parfait: clair, concis, d'une exposition brève et simple, dramatique, quand même, et empoignant de vérité cruelle et sûre. Nos paysans sont, là, dépeints tels qu'ils sont en effet." *Annales*, 1910, p. 366.

in *L'Engrenage*,<sup>1</sup> where at times it destroys the dramatic illusion. We have seen it also in *Ménages d'Artistes*,<sup>2</sup> *La Couvée*,<sup>3</sup> and to some extent in *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont*.<sup>4</sup> This conflict of elements is probably not due to what critics have called Brieux's duality of mind—that is, a mingling of cheerful humour and gloomy if not pessimistic seriousness. The probable cause is rather that Brieux felt the necessity of amusing the spectator while inducing him to accept unpleasant social truths. Brieux, when he chooses, can be consistently comic<sup>5</sup> or consistently serious.<sup>6</sup> In *Les Remplaçantes*, it did not suit his purpose to be entirely either one or the other. In order to clinch Dr. Richon's argument, it would be necessary to make Lazarette's baby, and some of the others whose mothers serve as "substitutes" in Paris, die as victims of the evil custom. But the sugar coating of comedy which the dramatist deemed necessary to make his didacticism palatable, did not permit such a tragedy. Yet though this particular play ends happily, it points no less definitely than *La Robe Rouge* to general tragic results, unless the evil which it censures is checked.

Similar fault cannot be found regarding the unity of tone of Bazin's *Donatienne*, the novel on the same subject as *Les Remplaçantes*, which

<sup>1</sup> Discussed in Chapter VI.

<sup>2</sup> Analysed in Chapter III.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Chapter V.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Chapter IX.

<sup>5</sup> See *Les Hannelons*.

<sup>6</sup> *La Robe Rouge*, analysed in the preceding chapter.

appeared in the following year, 1902. It is uniformly gloomy, and yet its didacticism is less prominent than Brioux's.

The heroine, Donatienne, leaving her husband and three young children on their small mortgaged farm in Brittany, accepts a call as a "substitute" for a wealthy bourgeoisie. In Paris she yields to the temptations of a life of splendour, takes a lover, and pays no attention to her husband's appeals for money. Subsequently she lives in free love with a tavern-keeper. When after a desperate struggle with poverty her husband has lost everything, he puts his children into a hand-cart and tramps over the country. While working in a stone-quarry, he receives fatal injuries. The unfaithful wife, who at length feels remorse for abandoning her children, returns now at the end of eight years.

In truth to life, Bazin's heroine falls far short of Lazarette. It is doubtful whether one peasant woman in a million would abandon her children as Donatienne does. In other respects the reality of the novel is admirable; but it is unfortunate that it should fail in regard to the heroine, for on her character the moral depends.

Nursing not only may ruin the households of the peasant women who give themselves up to it; it may also bring ruin to the children whom they nurse. This is the aspect of the question that Alexandre Hepp and Paul Margueritte have studied in their novels, *Le Lait d'une Autre* and



*Nous, les Mères*, which appeared respectively in 1891 and 1913.

In M. Hepp's novel, *Le Lait d'une Autre*, Davin, a military type of man, pleads earnestly with his wife to nurse her baby, but, encouraged by her mother, she entrusts this sacred duty to a *fillemère*. The provincial "substitute" has had no difficulty in obtaining testimonials regarding her moral character and a statement from a mayor certifying to the age and health of her child,<sup>1</sup> whom she abandons to its fate. Ultimately it dies from neglect. Strange to say, she proves satisfactory to Mme. Davin, who keeps her year after year, leaving the boy entirely in her charge, even after the nurse has taken a lover. To be sure, the indignant husband eventually drives her from his home, but only after his son has acquired a vicious habit, which leads to a fatal illness. Thus Mme. Davin, by shirking her duty of a mother, causes the death of her own child and indirectly that of the nurse's.

Paul Margueritte's *Nous, les Mères*<sup>2</sup> deals primarily, we have seen in considering works related to *La Couvée*, with parents' duties towards their children after they have passed the nursing age.

<sup>1</sup> The Roussel law requires a physician's certificate, countersigned by the local mayor, to the effect that the nurse's baby is at least seven months old and in good health, before she may engage her services. In certain geographical departments, however, this law is not enforced. O. Gevin-Cassel, *Rev. Bleue*, July 26, 1902.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Chapter V, p. 130.

The main question is whether Mme. Gimones is to devote herself to her mother or to her daughter and her daughter's little girl. But a subordinate problem is naturally the same as that of M. Hepp's novel.

Julia Gimones, under the pretext that she is weak and worn out, engages a nurse for her baby. Her husband, Raymond, does not object, though his mother, who knows Julia's passion for worldly amusements, declares that she is well and quite able to nurse. But to her mother-in-law's remonstrances Julia replies with a flat refusal: "*J'ai assez souffert; neuf mois de malaises, la difformité, aucune distraction; non, merci, j'ai besoin de revivre, moi!*" When they change nurses, the baby becomes thin and pale and falls ill. An attempt to rear it with the bottle having succeeded no better, Raymond's mother says to Julia reproachfully: "Through your fault, your child is puny and likely to succumb to illness at any time."

This episode of *Nous, les Mères* shows Paul Margueritte quite in accord with Alexandre Hepp on the question of nursing. It is regrettable that he does not treat the theme more comprehensively.

The evils of wet nursing, however, as seen by French men of letters, are already evident. Demoralization of the "substitute," demoralization of her husband, illness or death of their child, physical and moral ruin of the bourgeois child, idleness, economic ruin of the peasantry, contrac-

tion of venereal disease by the nurse,—such is a partial list of the sins recorded against the substitute custom in recent French literature. In point of variety and comprehensiveness the indictment leaves little to be desired, though as has been hinted in the analyses of the works, they fail because of certain faults of art to make their argument as strong as it might be. The most successful is *Les Remplaçantes* which, notwithstanding its faults, presents the subject on the whole with a vigour and originality worthy of the traditions of the French stage.

When Dr. Richon makes one of his arguments against Lazarette's going to Paris as a wet nurse her risk of contracting venereal disease, he virtually brings Brieux to the subject of his next play, the much-talked-of *Les Avariés*, which was ready for the stage shortly after *Les Remplaçantes*, but was not presented till some time afterwards. Thus *Les Avariés* might be cited among the works which attack the custom of mothers' hiring themselves to suckle other infants than their own. But as in Paul Margueritte's novel, this is only a subordinate theme. The main question of the drama is whether all people have a moral right to bring children into the world. Not unless they are sound in body and mind, is Brieux's conclusion. Conscious of this truth, and convinced that the future of mankind is more important than art, he wrote *Les Avariés* (1901), which, though immediately rehearsed at Antoine's theatre, was pro-

hibited by the French censorship.<sup>1</sup> The following year it was produced in Liège and Brussels, but it was not till 1905 that Antoine was allowed to offer it in Paris. M. Roujon, in explaining the interdiction, wrote:

The generation of life, accouchement, and the medication of syphilis are not immoral subjects; but they are not appropriate for the stage. Let us confine each thing to its proper domain: the stage in one place, the clinic, the hospital, the Dupuytren Museum<sup>2</sup> in another. Let them play Brieux's drama at the amphitheatre.

It is in reality a question not of artistic propriety so much as of dramatic utility. The inconsistency of objecting to a play like *Les Avariés* has been shown by Bernard Shaw, who observes:

All the allurements of sex may be exhibited on the stage, heightened by every artifice that the imagination of the voluptuary can devise, but not one of its dangers and penalties. We may, and do, parade prostitution to the point of intoxicating every young person in the theatre; yet no young person may hear a word as to the diseases that follow prostitution and

<sup>1</sup> Of a reading of *Les Avariés* by the author at the Antoine Theatre in November, 1901, Edmond Stoullig says: "We were soon convinced that Brieux, imbued with such high moral ideas, was anything but a pornograph." *Annales* (1901), p. 379.

<sup>2</sup> The Dupuytren Museum in Paris contains collections illustrative of anatomy, histology, etc.

avenge the prostitute to the third and fourth generation of them that buy her.<sup>1</sup>

After bitterly arraigning the official censorship for its warm approval of pornographic and adultery plays, Gaston Deschamps points out the consternation and opposition of the same officials if perchance a dramatist attempts to represent in vivid images the urgency of a social question.<sup>2</sup> Almost no subject is inappropriate for literary treatment, provided the author possess the ability to make it *seem* appropriate. Those who fear that the public discussion of delicate subjects will exert an immoral influence are, as a rule, persons who confound ignorance with virtue.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Shaw, to refer to him again, declares that with regard to the evils of disease and contagion, our consciences are sound enough: what is wrong with us is ignorance of facts.<sup>4</sup>

We learn at last [he says] that the majority of victims are not the people of whom we so glibly say, "It serves them right," but quite innocent children and innocent parents, smitten by a contagion which, no matter in what vice it may or may not have been originated, contaminates the innocent and the guilty alike.<sup>5</sup>

The danger is the greater in a country like

<sup>1</sup> *Three Plays by Brieux.*

<sup>2</sup> *Le Malaise de la Démocratie* (1899), p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> F. C. Chandler, *Aspects of Mod. Drama*, p. 369.

<sup>4</sup> *Getting Married.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



France, where, it is affirmed, young people often are brought up without the slightest hint that they are some day to be fathers and mothers.<sup>1</sup> The only thing that never enters into the plans of French parents is the question whether, physically and morally, the two young people whom they are going to have united are such as to promise healthy, robust offspring.<sup>2</sup> Hence the assertion of J. Ernest-Charles that in France marriage is so arranged that it offers the greatest possible obstacles to the improvement of the race.<sup>3</sup>

Social manners based on such ignorance, short-sightedness, and prejudice, Brieux thought urgently demanded the campaign of instruction and enlightenment which he undertakes in *Les Avariés*.

Upon being told by a specialist in his consulting room that he has the "unmentionable" disease, Georges Dupont explains, amidst pitiful lamentations, the precautions he has always taken against this very danger, with one exception—a lark immediately preceding his betrothal and the signing of the marriage contract. With the dowry of Henriette, his charming fiancée, he was to have bought a notary's practice: instead, he will be wheeled about in a chair. No, he prefers to kill himself!

The doctor explains the danger of neglecting the disease, but declares that, thanks to medical science, ninety-nine cases in a hundred are curable

<sup>1</sup> L. Ulbach, *Rev. Bleue*, Aug. 6, 1881.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Oct. 1, 1904.

if treated in time.<sup>1</sup> When the *avarié* hears that he can be cured and can still marry Henriette, his hopes revive, but only to be dashed the next moment by the doctor's demand that he postpone his marriage for three years.<sup>2</sup> This, Georges says, is quite impossible, because the bans are published and he has borrowed the money to pay for his practice. Moreover, his future father-in-law, a man of violent temper, will brook no trifling. The doctor appeals to the young man's humanity, explaining the crime of transmitting his disease to others, and the frightful lot of a child born of syphilitic parents.<sup>3</sup> The patient says that he will "think the matter over," but the physician understands that he intends to consult a quack doctor for a speedy cure.

At the opening of Act II, Georges and Henriette, who have been married and have a baby, have entrusted it to a peasant nurse in the country,

<sup>1</sup> Auguste Forel is much less optimistic. "The cure of syphilis," he says, "is often uncertain." And again: "The complete cure of syphilis is very difficult, if not impossible, to prove." *The Sexual Question*, pp. 213, 299.

<sup>2</sup> Maxime Duprat, a contaminated character in André Couvreur's novel, *Les Mancenilles*, does not marry for a couple of years after contracting the disease, and yet the results are deplorable.

<sup>3</sup> "Syphilis," the doctor goes on to say, "is a great murderer of children. Herod reigns in France and over the whole earth. Every year he begins again his massacre of the innocent."

In Paul and Victor Margueritte's *Femmes Nouvelles*, we read: "If only you knew how sad the spectacle of infantile suffering is—the infirmities of those poor little children, poisoned by organic ailments, their sole heritage from their parents."

under the supervision of Georges's mother. In discussing the six months' postponement of their marriage, Georges tells Henriette that a famous specialist, who feared that he had tuberculosis, wanted him to wait three years, but that a second-rate doctor cured him in three months.

While Henriette is out, Georges's mother arrives with the baby and the specialist, whose predictions, needless to say, have come true. The doctor insists that the baby be immediately put to the bottle, in order not to contaminate the nurse, but Mme. Dupont, who places her grandchild's welfare above every other consideration, tries to bribe the nurse, without telling her the truth. Here we have bourgeois unscrupulousness pitted against peasant obstinacy in a scene which is comic as well as tragic. The guilty husband entreats the doctor not to reveal the secret to his wife, but a servant having overheard the discussion and told the nurse, she cries out, when insulted by the *avarié*: "Your child is rotten, because you have a loathsome disease that you contracted from the women of the street." Henriette, who has just stepped in, faints on hearing these brutal facts.

When in the last act Henriette's father, who is a member of Parliament, calls at the specialist's office to obtain a certificate attesting his son-in-law's disease, that she may get a divorce, the doctor refuses on the ground of professional secrecy. Furthermore, he points out the folly of

burdening the young wife's name with a scandal, just as he meets the deputy's threat to have the child examined by another doctor, in order to obtain the necessary proof, by remarking that the innocent little victim already has a dark enough future. It becomes clear that Henriette's father has his share of responsibility in the matter, for, though he made a thorough investigation of his future son-in-law's financial status, he failed to inquire about the most important thing of all: his physical condition. The doctor therefore draws the inference that, while nowadays before concluding a marriage the two families bring together their notaries, it would be even wiser to consult their physicians also. The implacable father-in-law confesses that in his younger days he exposed himself to this same disease, but had the good fortune not to contract it.

And so they decide that Henriette shall live with her husband. The doctor assures the deputy that a couple of years hence he will be a happy grandfather. He attacks Parliament and the Government for not combating syphilis, alcoholism, and tuberculosis—the terrible trinity that destroys thousands of lives every day. The legislator sees the necessity of action, as regards the first of these scourges, for the doctor's patients, who are now brought in, relate sickening experiences. One girl, after contracting syphilis, has sowed it broadcast, in order to avenge herself. The deputy is soon convinced that old and young



must be taught not only the nature of venereal diseases, but also the grave danger of neglecting them.<sup>1</sup>

In *Les Avariés*, more than in any other of Brieux's better known plays, art suffers from didacticism. The third act, which has been called "a lecture between two personages," is not essential to the plot; strong dramatic situations in the play are almost wholly wanting. But, as we have seen, Brieux did not write this drama for its literary value; he wrote it for its lesson. The dramatic utility of the piece, in carrying the lesson, is attested by the discussions following the recent presentation of it on the American stage under the title *Damaged Goods*. One writer says: "This sociological drama . . . has awakened a wider interest and caused more serious discussion than any other play produced in recent years."<sup>2</sup> In view of the interest in it, the play was presented before the President and Congress.

These results of *Les Avariés* belie the sneering opinion of Dr. Brouardel, a Paris medical celebrity, who, without having heard the reading of it, de-

<sup>1</sup> In *Bubu de Montparnasse*, a novel by C. L. Philippe, the hero lives in free love with a girl, whom he compels to beat the streets as a prostitute. Having contracted syphilis and contaminated others, the girl takes treatment for awhile, but subsequently falls deeper and deeper into the gutter. This novel, though lacking the scientific basis of *Les Avariés*, shows essentially the same ravages that are sure to follow the "unspeakable" disease, if it is communicated thoughtlessly instead of being combated by medical aid.

<sup>2</sup> Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, Feb. 1, 1914.



clared that the stage could not impart scientific instruction.<sup>1</sup> The doctors, who bore the author of *L'Évasion* a deep grudge, would naturally regard him as incompetent to instruct in any subject which they were accustomed to call particularly their own. Dr. Prieur, however, admits that nothing could be more exact than the evolution of the disease as described by Brieux, and that it would be impossible to surpass his skill in presenting the child's case. In a word, he asserts that *Les Avariés* is perfect from the standpoint of science, but a literary failure, whereas *L'Évasion*, a great literary success, has no scientific value.<sup>2</sup> In both statements there is exaggeration. While it is true that the last act of *Les Avariés* is more medical treatise than drama, the whole play has been condemned too severely for the faults of this act. The fundamental trouble with the act is that it is superfluous. The essential lesson is brought out by the end of the second act, and up to that point the play possesses dramatic merit.

Although it would be too much to say that Brieux has created a school, certain writers on medical-sociological questions undoubtedly, if unconsciously, owe their inspiration in part to him,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. de Bury, *Mercure de France*, Dec., 1901.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> One of such writers is Cosmo Hamilton, who, like the author of *Damaged Goods*, has manifested deep concern for the future of the race. In *A Plea for the Younger Generation*, he urges parents and the clergy to guide young people through the pitfalls of sex. (Cf. p. 46.) His drama, *The Blindness of Virtue*, emphasizes

while others greet him openly and enthusiastically as a leader. Among these authors may be mentioned André Couvreur, the Margueritte brothers,<sup>1</sup> and Michel Corday.<sup>2</sup> *La Graine* (*The Seed*, 1903), the most successful of André Couvreur's works, is dedicated to Brieux, whose influence is frequently apparent in it. The novel is both a plea for rational procreation and a warning against the evils of heredity. Though overcharged with didactic elements, *La Graine* presents the author's views clearly and forcibly. The plot is firm, and the families and types necessary to bring out the various contrasts are well characterized.

Brieux and the less known social writers of

both the imperative necessity of eugenic instruction and the almost insurmountable reluctance of parents to take upon themselves this duty. (Cf. Act II: "Why don't we tell our children the truth? Why do we go on hiding behind false modesty and personal cowardice?") In *The Sins of the Children* (1916), it is by a hair's breadth that the sons of Dr. Guthrie escape venereal disease, a peril he could have spared them by performing the most essential duty of a father. Thus Mr. Hamilton concludes that "the sins of the children are brought about by the neglect of the fathers" (p. 340). Upton Sinclair's novel, *Sylvia's Marriage* (1914), in which the child is born blind, reveals the influence of Brieux.

<sup>1</sup> In Victor Margueritte's novel, *Prostituée*, which was dramatized by H. Desfontaines, the infected husband becomes the author of their maid's motherhood, sullies an *ouvrière*, and contaminates his wife. Hence their child is born a degenerate.

<sup>2</sup> *Sésame ou la Maternité Consentie*, a novel by this social writer, who acknowledges his indebtedness to Brieux, develops the theory that a scientific discovery will enable man to control nature in her lavish, indiscriminate, and hence cruel production of life—a hope expressed by Brieux in *Maternité*.

similar tendencies, whether by working in mutual sympathy or by following each his own inspiration, have already made a creditable beginning in spreading information about venereal disease and wet nursing. The evils of both are today infinitely better understood by the masses in France than they were in the last years of the nineteenth century. At the same time the movement in favour of eugenic instruction and the medical certificate for marriage has won millions of adherents. Let us hope that the younger writers will continue Brieux's good fashion of frankly and boldly discussing such matters, whenever they believe such discussion to be needed.

## CHAPTER XV

### CHARACTER OF THE FRENCH PEOPLE. RELIGION

*La Française* (Brieux)—*La Foi* (Brieux)—*La Morte* (Feuillet)—*Le Prêtre de Nemi* (Renan).

THE two concluding plays of Brieux's so-called "second period," which appeared in the two years after *Les Avariés*, contain no matter that is radically new in his work. The narrowness and selfishness of the bourgeoisie and their unintelligent views of parental duty, which form the burden of *La Petite Amie* (1902),<sup>1</sup> resulting here in tragedy, he introduces more or less seriously in several other plays. *Maternité* (1903),<sup>2</sup> a powerful argu-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Chapter IX, p. 248, note 2.

<sup>2</sup> This drama treats the subject of depopulation in its relation to motherhood. In order to curry political favour, Brignac, a sub-prefect, becomes an apostle of repopulation, imposing upon his wife the birth of a child each year, though she knows that he is unfaithful to her. Owing to dread of scandal, however, he drives from his house both a servant about to become a mother (so compelling her to give birth to her child in a filthy den) and his wife's younger sister, Annette, whose seductor refuses to marry her because she has no dowry. In her despair, Annette, while living in Paris with her sister, who has left Brignac, has recourse to an operation by a midwife, which proves fatal. During the legal proceedings in the last act, the attorney for the defence, speaking in the author's name, lays the blame for such

ment for the rights of motherhood and a denunciation of men's egotism, puts primary emphasis upon ideas which Brieux had elsewhere made clear, even if of secondary importance. So too of the plays of the third, or "milder," period. Before *Les Hanneçons* (1906),<sup>1</sup> Brieux from time to time had thrown light upon his feelings regarding the tyrannical exactions of "free" love. *Le Bourgeois aux Champs* (1914)<sup>2</sup> emphasizes the incompatibility between bourgeois and peasant that Brieux had often previously pointed out. *La Femme Seule* (1913),<sup>3</sup> championing the cause of women who try to make an independent living, may seem at first sight to take up quite a new subject, though after all, Brieux has seldom missed a chance to advocate fair play between the sexes. But in two of his later plays, he considers matters which are as new, relatively to his other works, as the themes of *Les Remplaçantes* and *Les Avariés*.

crimes as Annette's upon the "hypocrisies" of society and the selfishness of the rich, who would impose upon the poor the burdens of repopulation.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Chapter IX, p. 250, note 1.

<sup>2</sup> Cocatrix, a barrister possessing the gift of gab, having obtained a smattering of science by reading popular books on agriculture, moves to the country, with the intention of regenerating farming, preaching hygiene and social justice. Naturally this embryonic socialist, who has the illusions of a M. Jourdain, a Tartarin, a Bouvard, and a Pécuchet, is duped and flouted by the peasantry in all his undertakings. Moreover, his childish social dreams threaten for a time to compromise the happiness of his daughter.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Chapter IX, p. 253, note 4.



These two, then, *La Française* and *La Foi*, deserve consideration at some length; without them, our study of the scope and purpose of Brieux's dramatic works would be incomplete. It was to be expected that some time he should treat these themes—the one of broadly national and the other of universal, interest.

Inasmuch as both the men and the women of France have, in the European war, vindicated the French character by daily deeds beyond eulogy, it is interesting to consider the former conception of France abroad and the reputation of her women. And the country that acquired immortal glory in the Crusades, so meriting the appellation "*filles aînées de l'Église*," the country that was for centuries protector of the Christians in the Orient and whose kings enjoyed the unique distinction "*très chrétien*," deserves to be associated with the eternal question of faith.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the two plays, though not Brieux's most recent works, are typical of his latest dramatical period. In this, sometimes far more than in earlier years, he has shown an inclination to make use of symbolism.

While cruising in Scandinavian waters, in 1905, Brieux was painfully grieved to observe that France and her people were completely misjudged abroad. "The majority of inhabitants in the Scandinavian countries," he declares, "think of

<sup>1</sup> On the supremacy of France in missionary and charitable work, see Léon Lallemand, *Hist. de la Charité*, iv, 31.

the Frenchwoman as a seventh-rate vaudeville actress who, with bantering look, sings silly couplets containing shady allusions." He goes on to say that France is judged by the pornographic books which too often are the only French works displayed in the show-windows of foreign bookstores. French residents abroad are greatly chagrined at all this, as the French consul at Bergen admitted to him. In order to combat such false impressions, the consul suggested that their embassies and consulates should employ officials to urge book dealers to display, at the side of the customary "filth," works that sustain the honour and the fame of French literature.<sup>1</sup>

Brieux's complaints are well founded. As long ago as 1843, Balzac depicted a royal *procureur* who arraigns certain French men of letters on this charge. "The good name of our women, especially," the magistrate says, "is slandered. For some time, this sort of vile literature has depicted only adultery."<sup>2</sup> Michelet made the same complaint, declaring that abroad people formed from such books a terrible and unjust impression of

<sup>1</sup> E. Brieux, *Illustration*, July 8, 29, Aug. 12, 19, 1905. Eight years before Brieux wrote *La Française*, Gaston Deschamps, after a searching study of French adultery literature, declared prophetically: "This subject is ripe for treatment. . . . It will appeal to all authors who believe that literature should concern itself with everything of vital interest to the national welfare." *Le Malaise de la Dém.*, p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> *La Muse du Département*. 1

France.<sup>1</sup> Feuillet, also, protested in 1867<sup>2</sup> and again twenty years later.<sup>3</sup> Henri de Bornier, while deploring what he calls "those shameful works which slander their century and their country," objects even more to the medicated immorality portrayed by certain authors in the guise of moral instruction.<sup>4</sup> Ferdinand Buisson's denunciation of "*cette presse pornographique*"<sup>5</sup> is equalled only by Félix Pécaut's powerful indictment of "*cette honteuse littérature*."<sup>6</sup> Both the French novel and dramatic literature were publicly condemned by the representatives of criminal law at their conference at Grenoble in 1912.<sup>8</sup> And the following year, Paul Gaultier wrote: "Who could describe the impression that this vileness creates among our neighbours! There are many foreigners whose knowledge of France is based on these obscene books, which slander our women, destroy our prestige, and undermine our influence in the world."<sup>8</sup> No wonder that the

<sup>1</sup> A. Fouillée, *La France au Point de Vue Moral*, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> *M. de Camors*, ii, ch. i.

<sup>3</sup> *La Morte*, p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> *La Lizardière*, ch. xvii. To this class of authors belongs Paul Bourget, who has been reproached for inciting to adultery in his earlier works. "I know . . . detestable books," observes René Bazin, "which have an excellent thirtieth chapter."

<sup>5</sup> *Rev. Pédagogique*, Apr., 1895.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct., 1894, and Mar., 1897.

<sup>7</sup> A. Capus, "L'Influence Littér," *Figaro*, June 3, 1912.

<sup>8</sup> "Le Poison de la Pornographie," *Rev. Bleue*, Sept. 6, 1913. The moral responsibility of authors is the timely theme of Bourget's *Le Disciple* (1889) and Rod's *Au Milieu du Chemin* (1900). Bourget not only censures certain writers like Renan, but also cries *mea culpa* in disavowal of his own earlier tendencies. (Cf.

very word "French," in certain worthy Anglo-Saxon families, is a synonym of frivolity and immorality. Needless to say, more serious, sober-minded people than the French in their inner family life do not exist.<sup>1</sup> Brieux observed that France likewise suffered abroad from the unpatriotic and unjustified self-disparagement of her own citizens. Alfred Croiset says: "In France we have always excelled in the art of self-abasement."<sup>2</sup> René Doumic,<sup>3</sup> J. Ernest-Charles,<sup>4</sup> Victor Giraud,<sup>5</sup> Claire de Pratz,<sup>6</sup> and Gaston Riou<sup>7</sup> make similar assertions. The most serious manifestation of this failing has been the spread in France itself of pessimism, discouragement, and lack of confidence in the national genius. The absurd theory of Latin decadence, though of German origin, was developed, crystallized, and given deplorable notoriety by such prophets as E. Demolins<sup>8</sup> and Léon Bazalgette,<sup>9</sup> both sons of

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*Le Disciple*, p. 327.) Rod is even more emphatic. Cf. his novel, pp. 24-263.

<sup>1</sup> Claire de Pratz, *France from Within*, p. xix.

<sup>2</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Nov. 23, 1912.      <sup>3</sup> *Deux Mondes*, June 15, 1898.

<sup>4</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Dec. 23, 1905.      <sup>5</sup> *Deux Mondes*, Dec. 1, 1913.

<sup>6</sup> *France from Within*, p. xvii.

<sup>7</sup> *Aux Écoutes de la France*, p. 247.

<sup>8</sup> *La Supériorité des Anglo-Saxons* (1897). This "superiority," according to Demolins, is due chiefly to the individualistic genius of the Anglo-Saxon, as opposed to the communitaristic Latin. In many respects, however, Demolins presents his subject with convincing fairness, as was to be expected from a disciple of Le Play.

<sup>9</sup> *A Quoi Tient l'Infériorité Fr.?* (1900). The author argued that nothing but a complete physical, mental, and moral reform

France. It was only after protests had been raised abroad,<sup>1</sup> that French pessimists began to be reassured.<sup>2</sup>

These facts are a sufficient "apology" for *La Française*, (*The Frenchwoman*), the three-act comedy which Antoine brought out at the Odéon in 1907. Brioux's purpose is to satirize the erroneous foreign conception of France and French women, attempting at the same time to remove the cause of this misconception by turning opinion against the frivolous tendencies of certain French writers.

Pierre Gontier is spending the "season" at Trouville with Marthe, his wife, Jacques, their boy of seven, and Geneviève, a daughter by his first wife. It is a model family; Marthe and Geneviève are like two affectionate sisters, and the little boy is sensible and well behaved. He is very fond of the story of a black kid, which his mother tells him as a reward for diligent study. Each day the attendants at the Paris Zoo used to give a kid to a big serpent to devour alive. Ordinarily the victim would crouch in one corner of the cage and let itself be devoured without resistance.

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(and by "moral" he meant anti-Catholic "renovation") could save France and the other Latin countries. Cf. the Span. trans. by Camp, pp. 94-180.

<sup>1</sup> H. G. Wells, *Anticipations* (1901); J. Novicow, *L'Expansion de la Nationalité Française* (1903).

<sup>2</sup> As E. Dimnet has said, the weakening of France came from ideas obscuring her reason and enervating her moral powers, *France Herself Again*, p. 381.



But one day the attendant put into the cage a little black kid which defended itself—even attacked the serpent—and so the director, fearing that it might make the serpent blind, ordered that the plucky little creature's life be spared. The moral is that one should never submit tamely to destruction, not even when it seems inevitable.

Not everything, however, goes well with the Gontiers. Geneviève has a suitor, but his father wants a bigger dowry than her father can give. His capital is invested in his foundry, and he needs money to launch an invention. Then, too, Pierre is not on the best of terms with an elder brother, called simply "Gontier," a sulking, surly royalist, who inherited their ancestral château. Having transformed a part of the château into an amateur carpenter shop and storage place for sporting-goods, he lets his land lie untilled rather than contribute anything to republican prosperity. He has long borne Pierre a grudge for supporting the Republic. While a sort of *émigré* in the Far West of America, Gontier became intimately acquainted with a ranchman, Bartlett, to whom, on returning to France, he entrusted the care of his son, Charles.

Charles, now a graduate of Harvard, arrives with Bartlett, to pay his first visit to his father, and before going to the château, makes a little visit to his uncle, Pierre. The ranchman, having read in countless French novels that every French woman welcomes a lover, infers from their cordial

reception that Marthe is making advances. His observation of the gay set at Trouville confirms the stories he has read. In reality Marthe's conduct has quite another motive. She shows her nephew every attention, foreseeing a love affair between him and Geneviève. What is more, knowing that Pierre needs a capitalist to finance his invention and that Bartlett is a wealthy man with business acumen, she wants him to be as friendly as possible.

The visit of Charles and Bartlett results in a reconciliation of the brothers, but does not disarm Gontier's hostility to the French Republic. In his aspersions he declares that before ten years France will be as insignificant as the Republic of San Marino.<sup>1</sup> And when Bartlett expresses his preference for America, Gontier's guests exclaim repeatedly with characteristic self-abasement: "*Ah! les Anglo-Saxons!*"

Emboldened by a week's visit in Paris, Bartlett presses his attentions upon Marthe, who calls him to order. The ranchman, in his amazement, stammers excuses, attempting to justify his attitude by what he has read in French fiction and by his observations at Trouville and in Paris. Marthe, after pointing out to him the folly of

<sup>1</sup> "There is a nation," declares Bodley, "to the members of which Frenchmen are more revengeful than to Germans, more irascible than to Italians, more unjust than to English. It is to the French that Frenchmen display animosity more savage, more incessant, and more inequitable than to people of any other race." *France*, i, 215.

judging the women of her country by popular French literature, the *demoiselles* of the boulevards and the political carping of French calamity-howlers, exclaims:

What nonsense! I assure you that there are still worthy people in France. There are still respectable women, too! They are the women whom you do not see—that is, the great majority—those who live with their husbands and children around the family hearth of their homes.

Having made his peace with Marthe, Bartlett now offers to finance Pierre's invention, if he will come to America; but Pierre, whose favourite maxim is, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," prefers to sell his patent. Bartlett declares that this proverb has done more harm to France than a disastrous war.<sup>1</sup> He criticises the French for lending their money to other nations instead of investing it at home. As a consequence of this national economic sin, a foreign house operating on a large scale is going to sell the articles manufactured by Pierre at less than his cost price, thus putting his antiquated establishment out of business. In order to prevent this calamity, the

<sup>1</sup> If a country suffers economically and politically, its literature reflects such injury, according to René Doumic, who writes: "The literary fortune of a people is vitally dependent upon its general fortune, its commerce, its diplomatic success, and its military prestige. The literature of a country is closely connected with the fate of all its energies and declines with them." *Le Cosmopolitisme Littér. en 1900.*

American finally decides to furnish Pierre the capital; they will exploit his invention in both countries. Charles, who, it goes without saying, will marry Geneviève, is to remain in France as Pierre's associate. He and Bartlett have formed a more favourable opinion of France.<sup>1</sup> A country, they think, which recuperated so rapidly after the disasters of 1870, notwithstanding the destruction of its vineyards by the phylloxera, should not lose faith in itself. In other words, according to the fable of the Black Kid, France must not consent to her destruction, by her neighbours or by herself.<sup>2</sup>

It is the substance rather than the form of *La Française*, for which it is to be commended. In dramatic action the piece is conspicuously weak; it would have made a better novel than drama. But it is admirable in setting aright ideas about the French character and in driving home national truths. In a certain sense, it is a refutation of Becque's comedy, *La Parisienne*, which at first bore the same title as Brioux's play, *La Française*. Naturally Brioux, the champion of the French-woman as a faithful wife and mother, as a devoted guardian of the fireside, as a woman unrivalled in business capacity and artistic taste—in *La Française* she receives all these tributes—denies

<sup>1</sup> The surprise of foreign students on discovering how much hard work is done in Paris, a city which they have always conceived as a centre of vice and pleasure, is depicted by Pierre Sales in his novel, *La Fournaise* (1913).

<sup>2</sup> Le Play did not think France doomed to decay. Cf. *L'Organisation du Travail* (1870), p. 124.

that such a type as Becque's heroine is in any sense representative even of Paris, much less of all France. Women like her exist in France, no doubt, as they do in all countries; but it is false to generalize from a few isolated cases.<sup>1</sup> To just such unwarranted generalizations, based on the *demoiselles* of the boulevards and the poetic reign of adultery in French fiction, is due, as we have seen, the unfortunate misconception of France abroad.

All true friends of France are grateful to Brioux for his efforts to correct these erroneous foreign impressions, to satirize unwarranted political fault-finding among his compatriots, and to induce them to abandon their unwise commercial timidity. After attacking customs, systems, and abuses in his other plays, it is meet that here he should appeal for domestic accord, national harmony, and confidence in the French genius.

In its confident faith in the destiny of his country, *La Française* in a sense joins the theme of *La Foi*, which came two years after it, in 1909; for to Brioux, faith in a supreme being—the subject considered in *La Foi*—presupposes faith in a country with such a noble history as that of France. But we should not assume *La Foi* to be the result of *La Française*; the germ of the later play had been in the author's mind for years.

<sup>1</sup> J. E. Bodley, to whom we owe the best foreign interpretation of France, says: "That is the last country in the world about which it is possible to generalize." *France*, i, 4.



To a representative of *Le Figaro*, who called to interview Brieux regarding the genesis of *La Foi*, he said:

Before the age of twenty-five, having lost my religious faith, I chanced, while on an excursion, to visit a famous sanctuary (Lourdes is meant) where miracles are said to be performed. Impelled by a keen interest of curiosity, I pressed quite close to the miraculous Statue, in order to observe the fervent suppliants. The sick, the halt, and the incurables in despair, pitiable and truly tragic—all were imploring a miracle. Tears flowed down my cheeks; and if it had been in my power to destroy the faith of this pitiable multitude by crying out that miracles were falsehoods, would I have done so? By no means.<sup>1</sup>

It was there that Brieux conceived the idea of writing a drama on this grave subject. But owing to profound respect for all sincere convictions, for years he could not decide to give his conception a tangible form.<sup>2</sup> While travelling in Egypt, however, he found the background and still more the moral atmosphere for his characters.

The scene of *La Foi* (the play has been translated into English under the title *False Gods*) is

<sup>1</sup> G. Sorbets, *Illustration Théâtrale*, June 15, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Brieux's *Discours de Réception*: "A l'âge où j'ai librement découvert les beautés de l'adorable mythologie grecque, j'entrevois déjà que toute idole est sanctifiée parce qu'on a prié devant elle et que toute religion mérite notre piété, si elle offre pendant un certain temps, à l'humanité affolée et misérable, un apaisement, une consolation et une espérance."

laid in upper Egypt during the Middle Empire. Miracle day is at hand—the annual occasion when the multitude, called together by the clergy assembled in the Temple, chants the sacred hymn to Isis and in response the goddess designates the virgin to be offered in sacrifice to the Nile for another year's fertile inundation. When the ardent prayers of the people, prostrated before the goddess, attain the desired fervour, the chosen virgin beseeches Isis to bow her stone head and grant Egypt her protection. This act of divine grace is followed by miraculous cures among the multitude.

These matters are discussed by a group of virgins assembled before the house of Rhéou, a dignitary at the court of the Pharaohs, who personifies official hypocrisy. His blind wife, Miéris, who each day places flowers before a statue of Isis, imploring the goddess to restore her sight, symbolizes suffering, groping, hoping mankind. The superstition of the grossly ignorant is embodied in Pakh, a potter. On the other hand, Pakh's son, Satni, who has studied abroad, represents truth, enlightenment, and reason. Satni is betrothed to Yaouma, the virgin chosen for sacrifice to the Nile.

The young scholar, knowing the truth about miracles and sacrifices, entreats Yaouma to refuse to be sacrificed. His new ideas have spread so rapidly that Rhéou asks him to cure Miéris, who has almost completely lost faith in the gods.

And although Satni denies that he or anybody possesses this power, Yaouma and others think that he is a new god. Rhéou, turning as he thinks to the rising sun, urges Satni to slay Pharaoh and the High Priest and to appropriate their power, but Satni again refuses, declaring that truth shall triumph without bloodshed. However, he cannot help explaining to the ignorant and the oppressed the folly of slaving for their masters in the hope of future reward: "You have been deceived. There is no Isle of Doubles. There is no reward after this life." Satni also defies the gods; and the populace, excited by his words, commit deeds of violence which he is unable to check. Furthermore, Miéris, whose consolation has been the constant expectation of a miracle, declares in her disillusion that her soul is "like the desolate walls of a house ruined by fire": empty, dark, devastated. "Oh, for an illusion!" she exclaims, "another illusion to replace the one that I have lost!" She wants to believe that there is a being above man.<sup>1</sup> Equally pitiable is the poor potter, the young reformer's father, who, having been mortally wounded in the uprising, implores his son to heal him. After making Satni confess

<sup>1</sup> E. Stoullig says of Fr. de Curel's *La Fille Sauvage* (1902): "I have drawn from the drama this conclusion, that we must not destroy the idea of the marvellous in simple souls, for fear of destroying also in them all faith and virtue; for fear of seeing them, without restraint, avenge the loss of their illusion by giving expression to all their dormant animal instinct." *Annales* (1902), p. 358.

that his new ideas are wrong, the father dies, yearning for his former faith.

Pharaoh orders Satni's execution, but the High Priest prefers to try coercion. After explaining to the young apostle the manipulation of the stone statue, he admits the multitude to the Sanctuary and leaves Satni to judge whether "consoling falsehoods" are justifiable. When Satni sees suffering mankind and hears the distressing sobs, the moans, and the supplications, he exclaims: "Oh, the poor wretches!" and draws the lever which works the head.<sup>1</sup> The "miracle" is greeted with delirious joy. Cripples throw their crutches into the air and dance about. Rhéou now disavows Satni, the reformer, and obtains the High Priest's pardon. But angered at the High Priest's revolting cruelty, Satni again proclaims what he sincerely believes, declaring before all that he himself has performed the "miracle." The fickle populace massacre him as an impostor while Yaouma, transfigured, passes on her way to the Nile.

And so not only does Satni's attempt to enlighten the common people fail, but a reconsideration of his retraction costs him his life. If we recall the yearning of Miéris and Pakh for their former faith, we are forced to the conclusion that it is both

<sup>1</sup> *Douceur de Croire* (1899), a drama in three tableaux by Jacques Normand, represents a savant resolved to declare to the pilgrims worshipping at the shrine of St. Hilda that their patron is an impostor. When, however, his deceased wife appears in a vision, imploring him to leave the worshippers in their illusion, he throws his documentary evidence into the fire.



unwise and wrong to undermine the spiritual convictions of the faithful.<sup>1</sup> But not unwise for the reasons given by Voltaire—that for political prudence the masses should be morally restrained by ignorance and fear of punishment in a future life. The Voltairian maxim, “*Il faut une religion pour le peuple*,” is based on the theory that enlightenment and truth are dangerous because they awaken in the masses discontent and hence resentment towards the ruling class. Miéris, Brieux’s personification of mankind, on the other hand, is discontented with “enlightenment” because it fails to satisfy her spiritual needs. The thought that a superior being does not exist makes her yearn for her former “consoling superstition.” In a word, Brieux argues that, inasmuch as faith is a spiritual necessity for many people, it is wrong to deprive them of this necessity.<sup>2</sup> Beyond this Brieux does not go. *La Foi* is not an appeal for faith any more than it is an attack upon religion. It seeks rather to explain the beneficence of faith and the moral and spiritual value of religion. On the consoling beneficence of faith will depend the advisability of attempting to “disillusion” be-

<sup>1</sup> Renan’s hero, Antistius, comes to the same conclusion: “Yes, a truth is good only for its discoverer. What is food for one person is poison for another. I wanted to better man, but I have perverted him.” *Le Prêtre de Nemi*, iii, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Brieux reasons much the same as Pascal in his famous “Il faut parler.” Maxime Du Camp, though not a believer, declares: “Il n’est pas accordé à tout le monde d’avoir la foi, mais il est imposé à chacun de ne point troubler la foi d’autrui.” *La Charité à Paris* (1885).



lievers by making them see "truth" in the light of "reason."

Essentially this same point of view has been taken not only by such conservative writers as Le Play, Feuillet, Vogüé, Jules Lemaître, and Bourget, but also by many liberals: Tocqueville, Quinet, Taine, Jules Favre, Hugues Le Roux. Bourget, after pointing to the unfortunate results of the eighteenth century (it was considered a moral duty for a man to share with his fellows the "truths" that reason had revealed to him), remarks that people are no longer convinced of the immediate beneficence of such enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> In the same vein, Eugène Pelletan observes:

The apostles of enlightenment would create a spiritual void in and around the soul—put it under a bell-jar, so to speak. Do they think that it will

<sup>1</sup> Numerous recent works either allude directly to the hostility of the French government to the Church or depict the ruinous neglect of the houses of divine worship in France resulting, as we infer, from this hostility. Thus Francis Jammes, in protesting against religious proscriptions, exclaims (*Géorgiques Chrésiennes*):

"Qui t'a rendue aussi ingrate, ô Nation?  
Tu chasses ta meilleure enfant de ta maison."

Maurice Barrès, after rejoicing at the firm stand of Catholicism against scepticism and rationalism (*La Colline Inspirée*, p. 44), wrote in defence of French religious monuments the powerful appeal entitled *La Grande Pitié des Églises de France* (1914). On the distressing condition of the churches in France, see R. Valléry-Radot's novel, *L'Homme de Désir* (1912), p. 242.

consent to this sort of suicide by asphyxiation? You may destroy only what you replace.<sup>1</sup>

Edgar Quinet, realizing this truth, concluded, in a letter to Michelet, that "*c'est une grande affaire que d'arracher à l'homme l'immortalité.*"<sup>2</sup>

This passive attitude towards existing faith does not satisfy the more serious moralists. Even if one is not a believer, they argue, one should follow the teachings of religion just the same.<sup>3</sup> Thus three men from different camps: Vogüé, a Catholic, Rod, a Protestant, and Paul Desjardins, an ironical dilettante, have agreed on the necessity of making religion a rule of life, and the duty of doing God's will.<sup>4</sup> Bourget says in the preface to his *Essais*:

For my part, the long diagnosis of the present moral ills of France has compelled me to admit the truth proclaimed by Balzac, Le Play, and Taine—masters whose authority is far superior to mine—that at the

<sup>1</sup> *Dieu est-il-mort?* p. 285. The author emphasizes the impossibility of expecting simple people to philosophize the livelong day. Hugues Le Roux, while admitting this possibility in the case of a limited few, remarks that the common people, women, and children are incapable of such abstractions. *Nos Filles*, ch. iv.

<sup>2</sup> "Lettres d'Exil à Michelet," *Rev. Bleue*, Apr. 4, 1885.

<sup>3</sup> Louis Bertrand, writing recently on the life of Saint Augustine, says: "His worst foolishness had been the desire to understand all things. He had failed in humility of mind. Then God had given him the grace to submit his intelligence to the faith. He had believed, and then he had understood, as well as he could, as much as he could." *Saint Augustin* (1914), p. 358.

<sup>4</sup> G. Lanson, *Hist. de la Litt. fr.*, tenth ed., p. 1090.

present time Christianity is the necessary condition of cure and health, for the individual as well as for society.<sup>1</sup>

Pressensé declared that an atheistic democracy practising what it preaches would be a veritable social hell.<sup>2</sup> This was admitted by Henri Martin, Jules Favre, and George Sand.<sup>3</sup> Finally, according to Tocqueville, there is no counterpoise to democratic revolution except religious faith.<sup>4</sup> It is only by a sort of aberration of the intelligence, and through moral violence to his nature that man strays from religious faith.<sup>5</sup>

Among writers of fiction, Octave Feuillet, in *La Morte* (*The Dead Woman*, 1886), has similarly attempted to show the necessity of dogmatic religion as opposed to materialism, science, and philosophy.

Mlle Sabine Tallevaut, having fallen in love with M. de Vaudricourt, poisons his wife, in order to marry him. Sabine's uncle and spiritual mentor, Dr. Tallevaut, a retired physician devot-

<sup>1</sup> "Pour les nations comme pour l'homme," Maxime Du Camp writes, "le spiritualisme, c'est la vie, et le matérialisme, c'est la mort." *La Charité à Paris*, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> "Dieu et la Loi civile," *Rev. Bleue*, Apr. 1, 1882.

<sup>3</sup> *L'Évolution philos. de la Dém. avancée*, *ibid.*, Apr. 4, 1885.

<sup>4</sup> E. Schérer, *La Dém. et la Fr.*, p. 9. However, Gabriel Séailles observes sarcastically: "Si grand que soit le bonheur d'être trompé, le peuple refuse ce bienfait et demande la vérité." (*Éducation ou Révolution*, p. 69.) According to Émile Faguet, modern democracy considers it a weakening of the sovereignty of the people to believe in God. *Culte de l'Incompétence*, p. 206.

<sup>5</sup> A. de Tocqueville, *La Dém. en Amér.*, i, 359.

ing his time to scientific research, in the hope of formulating a rational creed as a substitute for the "degrading superstitions" of religion, commits suicide on discovering his niece's crime. Not long after her marriage, Sabine demands the "right to happiness," and so M. de Vaudricourt, already sorely disappointed in his new union dies of grief when he learns the cause of Aliette's death.

The moral of Feuillet's tale appears in the conflict between the beliefs of his principal characters. Aliette is a woman of deep religious convictions. The noble example of her Christian life fails, however, to convert her husband, owing to the influence of Dr. Tallevaut who, though realizing the necessity of religious feeling and faith in an ideal, maintains that this faith must be scientific and rational. Dr. Tallevaut is essentially the eighteenth-century type of "philosopher": charitable, just, humanitarian—an ideologist sincerely convinced that mankind and the world are exactly as he conceives them. While admitting, like Renan, that the religion of science would not appeal to the masses, he argues that it will suffice to convert the intelligent few, who in time will persuade the masses by moral authority. He points with pride to his niece as an example of rational education for women. Hence the unbearable shock when Sabine, in justification of her crime, calmly says to him that "the tree of science does not bear the same fruit in all ground."



Feuillet's argument, though carrying conviction, is nevertheless somewhat arbitrary.<sup>1</sup>

Very different, naturally, are the views of Renan, the "*Grand Prêtre du Néant*,"<sup>2</sup> who satirizes "the egotism of the mighty, the stupidity of the masses, the infamy of the untruthful clergy, and the weakness of the liberal clergy." In *Le Prêtre de Nemi* (*The Priest of Nemi*, 1885), he considers the problem of a rational transformation of an absurd religion into a more humane, spiritual, and scientific form. Although the scene of his drama is laid at Alba Longa and at Nemi before the founding of Rome, this is only a disguise, just as is the Egyptian setting in Brioux's tragedy. The story is of the attempts of Antistius, the enlightened High Priest of the oracular temple of Nemi, to abolish sacrifices and turn the light of truth upon the dark network of superstition called religion. But his humanitarian reform fails because most people prefer the good old routine abuses of the past, at least in religion. Renan, like Brioux, admits that his hero, despite good intentions, does more harm than good. Nevertheless, he is convinced that in the end reform will triumph. He does not agree with the "citizen "

<sup>1</sup> The same objection might be made to *Histoire de Sibylle*, an earlier novel, in which Feuillet emphasizes the necessity of religion, attacks materialism, and shows that Catholicism, when it flows from its pure source, fully satisfies man's spiritual thirst.

<sup>2</sup> So Édouard Rod calls Renan in his *Idées Morales du Temps Présent*.



who asserts that "a country that abandons religion is doomed."<sup>1</sup> Rather he makes clear that he agrees with his priest, Antistius, that "the gods are an insult to God, just as God, in turn, will be an insult to the future scientific conception of the divine."<sup>2</sup>

The trend of religious thought, always obscure and difficult to diagnose from the opinions of critics and men of letters, is naturally problematic in France, where there are as many different shades of opinion as writers. To be sure, from time to time some critic thinks he has discovered a definite religious tendency. Now we are told that mysticism predominates<sup>3</sup> or that Nietzsche's

<sup>1</sup> Le Play observes that "the most prosperous peoples of our time are also the most religious."

<sup>2</sup> For a complete disavowal of Renan—a disavowal by his own grandson, Ernest Psichari—we need only open the recent novel, *L'Appel des Armes*, where one of the heroes says to the other (page 19): "Ce n'est pas un grand honneur, mon cher Maurice, que de mourir de soif dans un désert. Mais c'en est un que d'avoir une idée, ou, si tu veux, bien que le mot soit condamné, une foi."

How utterly different, too, from the dreams of Renan's reformer is the mission conceived by Robert Vallery-Radot's hero, Augustin, in *L'Homme de Désir* (1912), page 165: ". . . Je me voyais entraîner les assemblées," he says, in describing his vision of the future, "courber les peuples. Conquérant, législateur, poète, Dieu m'envoyait pour rétablir l'ordre chrétien comme aux temps de son antique majesté, et au souffle enflammé de mes discours, les paroisses refleurissaient, les familles fructifiaient dans l'union, les métiers renaissaient, les cités fortes et libres, pareilles à d'immenses ruches bourdonnantes, travaillaient dans la paix et la joie."

<sup>3</sup> A. Maurel, *Rev. Bleue*, Apr. 12, 1890.

vogue has spent itself.<sup>1</sup> Now Ernest Lavisse declares that French students are obsessed by religious feeling,<sup>2</sup> whereas Michel Stainville announces, on the contrary, an incalculable diminution, among the masses, of "the immense illusion that formerly sustained throne and altar."<sup>3</sup> Just before the outbreak of the European war, Jean Finot hailed what he termed the return of man to religion; and since the conflict began, numerous reports of a renaissance of faith have been published. On the other hand, we hear frequently that the unprecedented brutality and suffering of the war make people lose faith in the existence of a supreme being. Whatever be the state of affairs now, it does seem certain that before the war Renan's dogmatic scepticism had lost much ground to religious faith in one form or another.<sup>4</sup> So Édouard Rod maintained stoutly as early as

<sup>1</sup> É. Schuré, *ibid.*, Sept. 8, 1900.

<sup>2</sup> J. Honcey, *ibid.*, Jan. 3, 1891.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Mar. 24, 1900. Thirteen years later, however, M. Stainville was flatly contradicted by Alfred Capus, who noted the enhanced prestige of the curé in the politics-ridden rural districts as a result of imprudent anti-clericalism on the part of the French government and the harmful political activity of the lay teachers. ("Le Poncif Antimilitariste et Anticlérical," *Figaro*, May 26, 1913.) On the evolution of the liberal Voltairian sceptic, see the same author, *ibid.*, Aug. 19, 1912.

<sup>4</sup> If specific evidence were necessary to substantiate this claim, three significant facts would suffice. I refer to the conversion of Mme. Juliette Adam (the author who in 1883 wrote *Païenne*, in 1913 publishes *Chrétienne!*), the great popularity of Paul Claudel's dramatic works, and the sensational vogue of Louis Bertrand's *Saint Augustin* (1914).

1891 in his *Idées Morales du Temps Présent*, the best available diagnosis of the religious situation in France at that time. Rod concluded that the French, after throwing away their religion and morals, had adopted them again. To Brioux religion and morals, as at present understood, may be but crutches of the spiritually lame. But until enlightenment greater and truer than any now known to man works its miracle, Brioux pleads for respect for these "crutches."

## CHAPTER XVI

### CONCLUSION

THE sixteen plays which we have analyzed in detail show Brieux's broad range of interest, his remarkable talent for expressing sociological convictions in dramatic form, and his sane attitude toward the social problems of our time. His plays, except those dealing with marital misunderstandings, do not lend themselves to systematic classification; but the consideration of them singly rather than in groups has the advantage of presenting the better a particular theme of his in its relation to the thought of other French authors. And it is only by a comparative discussion of Brieux's themes that it is possible to understand to what extent he has made himself the spokesman of the various French writers interested in the same questions. This position he has won for himself of right, not only because of his earnestness in discussing topics of vital interest to his contemporaries, and frequently likewise to his immediate predecessors, but because in many cases—though not always—he is second to none in giving his theme skilful treatment.

Although Brieux has not formed a definite

philosophic conception of the social order,<sup>1</sup> he is at least consistent in his attitude towards the ideas of our time. After all, the essential business of the social reformer is to judge existing institutions and customs. We do not need new theories and new truths: it is far more important that the accepted truths and theories should be presented in their true light. The world is not governed by theories so much as by the adaptation of theories to practical needs. Brieux's impartial scrutiny of the social organism of France has led both to some surprising discoveries and to rectification of abuses. His efforts are the more fruitful since he neither distorts reality by magnifying everything that makes it detestable, after the fashion of the recent *comédie rosse*, nor weakens his case by the evanescent speculations of the dilettante.

He sees clearly that French society is still, more than a hundred years after the Great Revolution, in a painful process of transformation. The modern social structure, erected hastily on the ruins of the Old Order, reveals numerous defects and inconsistencies. Certain laws have lost their usefulness, or even become oppressive. Certain customs, distorted by vicious growths, have developed into veritable curses. The abuse of power, whether continued from earlier social conditions or newly developed, has become at

<sup>1</sup> The same may be said of Balzac, Flaubert, Hugo, Augier, Dumas *fils*, and Anatole France.



times almost intolerable—power of the parent, of the physician, of the judge, of man over woman; the power of money, of the press, of free speech, and of organized labour. Worst of all, there is no widespread moral responsibility. The public conscience is demoralized by egotism and indifference, which at least have seemed, if not in reality they are, the guiding principles of modern society.

Brieux knows full well that, in spite of all the advantages of individualism, society cannot ignore moral laws with impunity any more than it can change the implacable forces at the base of its economic life.<sup>1</sup> As a sincere friend of democracy he deplores the existence of evils that retard or defeat the realization of its dreams. When the evil seems grave, is it surprising that, in order to rouse his compatriots from their indifference, he should preach, admonish, denounce, and threaten? For he is convinced that people should and do go to the theatre not only for amusement, but also for intellectual culture, for ideas on ethics and sociology. Why should the dramatist entertain his audience exclusively with variations of the eternal triangle, when the vital questions affecting education, government, public health, population, marriage, divorce, parental duties, gambling, charity, and religion are vastly more interesting?

Surely we could not desire a nobler conception

<sup>1</sup> Jules Simon has demonstrated this truth convincingly in *La Liberté Politique* (1867).

of the dramatist's purpose. Literature concerns itself with life—that is, the manifestations of human activity. These manifestations do not consist exclusively in the relations between the sexes.<sup>1</sup> Nor need they necessarily find expression by an artist indifferent to man's moral and material welfare. As one writer expresses it: "Man is not made for art, but art for man. One thing—and only one—is superior to art in life:—life itself and mankind."<sup>2</sup> According to Renan—the Renan of 1859—it is an unworthy, degrading conception of literature, to take the view that it should be confined to a *jeu d'esprit* without application to the social questions of our time. After declaring that such a radical misconception would place us in the situation of the grammarians of

<sup>1</sup> Brunetière remarks that "l'amour n'est et n'a jamais été, ni ne peut être la grande affaire que de quelques désœuvrés, dont le temps n'est ni de l'argent, ni du travail, ni de l'action, ni quoi que ce soit qui puisse se transformer en utilité sociale."

It is one of Brieux's merits to have understood this truth, and a still greater merit to have had the courage of his convictions. Similar is the attitude of Émile Fabre, of whom Firmin Roz has recently written (*Rev. Bèue*, Dec. 23, 1911): "His dramas present the great problems of contemporary society and develop before the spectator the various forms of our social activity. He has shown that these subjects are rich in dramatic substance and far richer in dramatic truth than all the stories of adultery around which the majority of our dramatic productions gravitate as if hypnotized." Even Catulle Mendès, one of the devotees of art for art's sake, goes so far as to admit that "other subjects than adultery may tempt the dramatist's inspiration."

<sup>2</sup> A. Bertrand, *E. Brieux*, p. 9. Compare Rod's attack upon art for art's sake—his earlier creed—in *Au Milieu du Chemin* (1900), p. 28.

antiquity, he maintained that the great problem of the nineteenth century was not God, nor nature, but mankind.<sup>1</sup> Life being made up of a thousand complex realities, our actions are vitally dependent upon those of our fellow-creatures.<sup>2</sup> Who would deny that the conflicts and tragedies of life are due to the form of our social institutions and the "prejudices" of society quite as much as to the passions of the human heart? The mere fact that a dramatist portrays the conflicts of life in the light of their social causes and consequences, does not necessarily detract from their artistic value. In other words, the works of George Sand, of Augier, or Dumas *fils*, with their pronounced moral tendencies, stand comparison with the works of Leconte de Lisle, Théophile Gautier, or the Goncourts, who disclaimed and disdained all moral purpose.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Essais de Morale*, pp. 6, 82. Elsewhere in the same work (Renan was not yet a dilettante) we read: "L'art veut du parti pris, et ne s'accommode pas de ces moyens termes où se complait le critique."

<sup>2</sup> Paul Leroy-Beaulieu points out that the life of each one of us is intertwined in this enormous network of combinations . . . which touch upon our profession, our fortune, our opinions, our tastes, our relaxations, our general conception of the world, and our particular conception of the arts, literature, the sciences, education, politics, and the work of helping others. *The Mod. State*, p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> Brunetière says: "The useful and the beautiful are certainly not irreconcilable or incompatible. And especially we must not think that the one can dispense with the other; that a work of art is moral because it is beautiful, or beautiful because it is moral." *La Litt. européenne au XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle*.

In recent years the tendency to stand for something in literature has been growing among French men of letters.<sup>1</sup> Not a few of them—novelists, dramatists, critics, essayists—now take part in the controversies that were formerly reserved for political economists and statesmen. The literary creed of the impassive artist is becoming an antiquated rarity.<sup>2</sup> Now we are assured that all the works of Lucien Descaves have as their prime object the reparation of error, the setting aright of injustice.<sup>3</sup> Now we read that René Bazin regards his literary mission as didactic and moral.<sup>4</sup> It is asserted that Paul Bourget became a dramatist in order to bring his social theories upon the boards, which, like Brieux, he considers a convenient “tribune.”<sup>5</sup> Vogüé thinks that moral

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Émile Faguet illustrates the point with a comparison of Tolstoy and Renan: “If, standing with Tolstoy before a picture, or a novel, or a woman, you ask him whether the object is beautiful, he will say that it is beautiful if it is moral. To the same question, Renan will reply that the object is moral if it is beautiful.” *Rev. Bleue*, June 13, 1896.

<sup>1</sup> In G. Lanson’s discussion of the literary movement in France during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, we read: “Les écrivains qui se sont senti le don de l’observation morale ont émigré en masse (that is, from the sciences, history, and memoirs) vers le roman et le théâtre, pour mettre en action et en drame leur expérience.” *Hist. de la Litt. fr.*, tenth ed., p. 1073.

<sup>2</sup> A. Hallays, *Journal des Débats*, Mar. 12, 1901.

<sup>3</sup> E. Moselly, *L. Descaves*, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> A. de Bersaucourt, *R. Bazin*, p. 27. Bazin himself says: “I believe that . . . a work of art is a work of instruction, a lesson, an act of . . . guidance for others.” *Questions littér. et soc.*, p. 146.

<sup>5</sup> E. Stoullig, *Annales*, 1911, p. 235.



inspiration alone can justify the harshness of realism.

Brieux's dramatic theories, we have seen,<sup>1</sup> are supported by Dumas *filz*, who maintained that all literature which did not aim at perfectibility, morality, utility, was moribund. But the general tendency of French literature for centuries constitutes a more authoritative precedent. For the literature of France, while striving to attain artistic perfection, has always sought to reflect the moral aspirations of the time. This is true of the great names of the seventeenth century; and Boileau himself approves:

“Partout joigne au plaisant le solide et l'utile.  
Un lecteur sage fuit un vain amusement,  
Et veut mettre à profit son divertissement.”<sup>2</sup>

With Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot, with Destouches, La Chaussée, Mercier, and Beaumarchais, the tendency becomes particularly pronounced. In the nineteenth century, Lamartine, Vigny, Balzac, and Victor Hugo give free expression to their moral convictions.<sup>3</sup> And the

<sup>1</sup> Chapter II, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> “From *Le Tartufe* to *Le Mariage de Figaro*, the comedies that constitute the pride of our stage do not confine themselves to amusing the spectator. They give him moral food; they make him think. While preserving their comic character, they solicit and fix his attention upon the gravest questions of public and private morals.” G. Pellissier, *Nouv. Essais de Litt. contemp.*, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> G. Lanson, in speaking of Lamartine, says: “Et l'on ne peut



didactic preoccupation of contemporary French literature, as seen in the evolution of Rod, Coppée, Lemaître, Bourget, Barrès, the Marguerittes, Paul Adam, needs no comment. Still more significant are the cases of Zola and of Anatole France who, in their last works, desert the serene heights of indifference for the arena of social and political combat.<sup>1</sup> Finally Paul Flat, a standard-bearer of art for art's sake, surprises the literary world by writing *Le Frein* (1912).

The French are truly a nation of moralists.<sup>2</sup> The chain is unbroken of French authors who have never lost sight of the evolution of life, the social and moral aspirations of mankind. That is what constitutes the universality of French literature, which of all literatures is unquestionably the most social. It owes its eternal character to the social effort which it represents, as well as to its sense of style, its thought, and its philosophic depth.

Brieux's conception of the drama and of its function, then, is a continuation of well-established French tradition. If we need further expression of his views than our analyses of his several plays, we may have it in his own words:

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s'étonner des accents que firent entendre son éloquence et sa poésie, lorsqu'il élève jusqu'à lui nos misères sociales et nos inquiétudes politiques."

<sup>1</sup> "The successors of the great French novelists of 1865 and 1885," declares Bourget, "found themselves suddenly confronted with such grave social problems that they could not remain indifferent." *Pages de Crit.*, i, 129.

<sup>2</sup> A. Filon, *De Dumas à Rostand*, p. 167.

It seems to me [he writes] that the dramatist should make of himself a sort of intermediary for transmitting to the general public the thoughts of the great savants, which are inaccessible to the masses. These conceptions must be presented in a noble, generous form. Yes, that is our rôle: to win the masses by bringing within their reach the noble dreams of the philosophers and the savants.

More and more the drama must take up the study of the great social questions. The comedy of characters has practically been a closed genre since a certain Molière wrote. The comedy of manners? It is in all of our plays, but does not suffice to give them life. Therefore, let us put thoughts and deeds into our dramas. Material of this kind is abundant round about us, in the suffering of our fellow-creatures.<sup>1</sup>

Brieux is perhaps the first French dramatist to avow himself so frankly an intermediary between the philosophers and the masses, though other men of letters have been so in principle.<sup>2</sup> His idea has

<sup>1</sup> *Rev. Bleue*, Sept. 7, 1901. Brieux's views are still essentially the same, if we may judge by his address before the American Academy of Arts and Letters. "I have the profound conviction," he said on this occasion, "that the theatre may be a valuable means of instruction. I should not limit its ambition to the amusement of spectators. It has the right to touch upon the most serious and the most vital issues. By means of the drama I wish not only to make people think, to modify habits and facts, but still more to bring about laws that seem to me desirable. It has been my desire that the amount of suffering in the world might be diminished a little because I have lived."

<sup>2</sup> Guez de Balzac endeavoured to make the literature of antiquity accessible to popular readers. Fontenelle used literature

something in common with that of Jules Verne. But Brieux is interested in the moral, social, and political welfare of mankind, whereas Jules Verne's popular treatment of science aimed more particularly at amusement, man's happiness, and material comfort. Brieux seems to have been most influenced here by his early guide, Herbert Spencer, the greatest popularizer of philosophic thought of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Theoretically it sounds fascinating enough for a dramatist to communicate to the masses the dreams of philosophers and savants. But has Brieux done this? To a certain extent he has, especially in his "medical" plays (*Les Avariés*, *Maternité*), and also more or less in *L'Évasion*,

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as a medium for disseminating philosophy and science. Diderot, likewise. Abbé Barthélemy's *Le Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis* was written expressly for the purpose of bringing the beauties of antiquity within the reach of the masses. Pasteur never lost sight of the common people. Sully Prudhomme's use of philosophy and science as a means of instructing his readers is well known. Compare Camille Flammarion, the popularizer *par excellence* of astronomical science. Sainte-Beuve, pointing to the example of the seventeenth century, used to urge writers to bring their works within the reach of all. According to G. Lanson, this advice has borne fruit. "A solicitude long unknown to our writers," he observes, "now preoccupies many of them, even superior artists. They intend to be heard not merely by an *élite*, but by all France." Émile Faguet, however, thinks that literature and art, if popular, must be mediocre.

<sup>1</sup> "Interview," *Daily Mail*, Aug. 24, 1909. Cf. Chapter IV, p. 96. Herbert Spencer, the great exponent of English positivism, emphatically denied the assertion often made that he was a disciple of Auguste Comte. (*Soc. Statics*, ed. 1865, Introd.) At any rate, he owes his fame largely to his popularity in France.

*Les Remplaçantes*, and *Simone*.<sup>1</sup> In such plays as *Blanchette*, *L'Engrenage*, *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont*, *Le Berceau*, *La Robe Rouge*, *Les Hanneçons*, *Suzette*, and *La Femme Seule*, on the contrary, his inspiration has its origin in the emotion he feels from contact with his surroundings. This emotion is inspiration enough; it seizes him at the outset and holds him in its spell to the very end. As in the case of every true artist, there is the closest relation between Brieux's life and his works.

We have seen that it is generally impossible to trace any logical connection between the subjects of Brieux's plays. The reason is that, a born moralist,<sup>2</sup> he has a veritable instinct for the

<sup>1</sup> It has been asserted that before writing a play Brieux instructs himself thoroughly on the subject. It must be said to his credit, however, that he never makes a display of professional knowledge. One unavoidable exception is *Les Avariés*, where such knowledge must of necessity constitute a vital element of the play.

<sup>2</sup> Without wishing to discuss at length the merits or demerits of much-abused thesis literature, I agree with Augustin Filon, who takes the view that if the thesis is good, why should the play not be good also? (*De Dumas à Rostand*, p. 190.) Brunetière mentions a number of successful thesis plays, and Émile Faguet declares that "il n'y a guère de grande comédie de Molière qui ne soit une pièce à thèse." (*Propos de Théâtre*, iv, 42.) Georges Pellissier takes Becque to task for opposing thesis literature, since his works that count all support a constant thesis against mankind. Marcel Prévost's recent novel, *Les Anges Gardiens*, is proof that a convincing thesis need not mar a literary work. In this connection G. Lanson says: "Voltaire was not wrong in wishing to express on the stage his conception of life, of society, and the good; but he lacked the genius necessary to put his con-



disintegrating evils from which contemporary society is suffering; and being unable to occupy himself with all the subjects that suggest themselves, he chooses what at the time he regards the most urgent, even though it may seem to others commonplace. Large as his range of subjects is, it does not include the ordinary sex-themes, the mere sentimentalities of adultery,<sup>1</sup> the subtilities of passion, idle salon prattle, psychic problems, and the mysteries of the soul,—omissions which, in the opinion of some, constitute the whole of literature. His dramas are equally distant from the brutal "naturalism" of a Zola and the fragile grace of a Feuillet. If they lack the picturesque colouring of a Loti, a Mendès, a Richepin, they are free from the morbid characters of a Goncourt or a Bataille. Though excelling in satire and a somewhat grim humour, Brieux takes no interest in modernity and exoticism. Nor does he care for mysticism and the occult sciences. The themes which interest him are righteousness and justice, public conscience and fair play, the errors and vices of his compatriots, the onward

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ceptions in dramatic form." To my mind it is not the thesis play that is objectionable, but rather a thesis without a play.

<sup>1</sup> At least not for the sake of the theme. One seeming exception is *Les Hanneçons*, which, however, has a deep moral purpose. Nobody would say that Brieux wrote *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont*, *Les Avariés*, *La Petite Amie*, *Maternité*, *La Déserteuse*, or *Simone* in order to represent illicit love, much less to glorify unbridled passion. In every case, such a situation serves merely to prepare the social problem that he purposes to consider.



march of civilization, and the future of mankind. Fortunately he avoids questions of race-antagonism and party-strife.<sup>1</sup> Nowhere in his plays is the "Affaire" referred to.

It is not necessary to review either the subjects of Brieux's plays or the conclusions to which they lead him. Our summaries of them should have made clear the most important of his aims and fundamental ideas—his solicitude for the child, his contempt for *cabotinage* or any other kind of posing or affectation, his anxiety at some results of universal suffrage, his belief in the rights of women, his advocacy of longer courtship and compatibility rather than the dowry as the foundation of marriage, his concern for the economic welfare and the good name of France, his steadfast desire to prevent human suffering.

Although predominantly a liberal and sometimes aggressive in his zeal for reform, Brieux is in no sense an anarchist or a *révolté*, for he constantly seeks to ameliorate rather than destroy present conditions. Nor must we consider him a reactionary because he sees grave defects in the institutions of republican democracy.<sup>2</sup> Much as he regrets these defects, he would not favour a return to monarchical government, though he has unquestionably become

<sup>1</sup> In *La Française* one of his spokesmen says: "On a toujours tort de dénigrer son pays." It is related that certain Frenchmen were so unpatriotic as to represent the tragic disasters of the siege of Paris and of the Commune in caricature.

<sup>2</sup> In the struggle between the social body and the individual, like Augier, he favours the social body.

more conservative in recent years. Defects in democracy can be remedied, its abuses can be abolished, if the citizens will but lend their support. To enlist this support, is the unvarying purpose of his dramas.

As a true child of positivism, Brioux is an agnostic, but, as we have seen in *La Foi*, by no means an enemy of religion. With more truth he might be called a pessimist, and yet on the whole the optimistic element predominates in his works, for a reformer would go out of business if he did not have faith in the future of mankind. Pessimism does unquestionably mar *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont*, *Résultat des Courses*, *La Petite Amie*, and *Maternité*, but a true portrait of contemporary society must needs show some dark shades. Unfortunately, in the dramas just mentioned, Brioux exaggerates beyond reasonable proportions, though I doubt not that in every case he has recorded only his actual feelings and impressions. In justification of his pessimistic boutades M. de Ségur says: "*Lorsque vous pénétrez dans l'écurie d'Augias, ce n'est pas pour y ajouter, comme on a dit d'un autre, mais pour y faire passer un souffle vivifiant, un large flot limpide et purificateur. Votre pessimisme est tout imprégné de pitié.*"<sup>1</sup> In the light of this remark, Brioux's pessimistic tendencies are only expres-

<sup>1</sup> *Disc. de Réponse.* As one of the guiding principles of his life, Brioux quotes from Guyau: "Tout aimer pour tout comprendre, tout comprendre pour tout pardonner."

sions of the emotion he feels in presence of the suffering of his fellow-creatures, and indignation at the indifference of those largely responsible for the suffering. Here is proof again of the sincerity of his convictions.

And sincerity is Brieux's predominant characteristic. Not a single critic has denied him this quality, without which the efforts of the social reformer are inevitably doomed to failure. Other good traits that stand out prominently in his dramas are faith, vigour, and courage. Few men have a surer, more unerring sense of right and wrong than he. Few have a clearer conception of justice and injustice. Nobody approaches the study of social problems with greater sympathy and impartiality. It is not surprising that a man with these qualities—sincerity, faith, courage, sound judgment, impartiality, sympathy, a keen sense of right and wrong—should have been called "apostle."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Brieux's language and style have been severely criticised. Paul Flat observes: "He writes as people speak—as certain people speak—which is indeed the worst form. His is the style of the sociologist or of the economist, when it is not the style of the rostrum or of the political meeting." As a foreigner I admit my incompetency to judge in the matter. But I remember that practically the same criticism has been made of Rabelais, Molière, Honoré de Balzac, Musset, and Auguste Comte. To my mind, one may prefer Saint-Simon to Guez de Balzac or Voiture. According to Brunetière, it is quite possible that a good writer is simply one who says all that he wants to say, who says only what he wants to say, and exactly as he intended to express himself. Or, as Catulle Mendès puts it: "Tout artiste n'est tenu qu'à

There is yet to add to all this sum of good the merits of Brioux's art. Were the matter of his plays far less noteworthy than it is, their technique would still give him a conspicuous place among contemporary French dramatists. A mere enumeration of his superior scenes—whether comic, humorous, satiric, or tragic—would require several pages. Many of them have been indicated in our summaries of his plays. They show accurate observation of human nature, with remarkable insight into the character of the peasantry and of the lower-middle class; a faculty for discerning the essential points of dramatic interest in a given theme; and finally, the art of vivifying characters and situations with the emotion they awaken in him. This unity of art with sanity, sympathy, honesty, and seriousness of purpose fully explains Brioux's high rank among the French dramatists of his time. We can well understand now why Léopold Lacour should write: "*Nous saluons en lui un Français de race.*"

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réaliser son œuvre selon l'art qu'il conçoit; et, dès qu'il fait comme il a voulu, il a raison."





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